

Talking Together

Husbands and Wives in Communication

What the Church Can Do to Help

A Thesis

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Mathews is a woman who has followed Christ faithfully, even in the midst of the deepest tragedy. I want to be like her when I grow up.

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Dedication

To who else

but my beloved husband, Doug,
with whom I have loved communicating
for almost thirty years.

Thank you for being a fellow pilgrim.

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Thank you for acting out what it means to be
the servant-hearted head of our family.

Abstract

Men and women do not naturally understand each other even when they speak the same language. Study after study in the realm of social psychology has demonstrated that communication is a problem for husbands and wives. These same studies show that good communication heads the list of characteristics essential for a marriage satisfying to both partners. This dilemma is not easily solved, as current divorce statistics evidence. A culture that trumpets, “Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus,” can dishearten spouses from even making an attempt at good communication.

This thesis aims to demonstrate that the roots of the communication problem are theological in nature; therefore the solution must also be theologically grounded. A realization that God values words can be a motivator for Christians to be more intentional about the way they speak and listen. Understanding that men and women equally image God can encourage mutuality in dialogue and marriage alike. The church is uniquely positioned to aid husbands and wives in improving their communication, because it has long known what social scientists are now “discovering”—it is not enough to give skill training; intent must also be addressed. The church is also well positioned to deliver the solution that social scientists recommend—communication-enhancing “booster shots” given at regular intervals.

The thesis project was the writer’s attempt at one of these booster shots, a “speakerless” weekend marriage retreat with communication as its focus. The retreat was designed to appeal to both genders and various learning styles. The writer also details other ways the church can be at the forefront of helping husbands and wives make their communication flourish

Chapter 1

The Problem and Its Setting

Introduction to the Communication Problem

“So here I am,...Trying to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate,
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion.”
T. S. Eliot *The Four Quartets*¹

“Words are not, in fact, the neutral entities we might intuitively assume them to be. Each of us develops a relationship towards words, based on repeated experiences of their usage and of the referents which lie behind the words.”

Peter Cotterell & Max Turner *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*²

“We must be reminded that the first condition for mutual understanding is the desire for, the seeking after, and the willing of that understanding. Such a statement may appear very commonplace. Nevertheless, this basic attitude toward understanding others is far rarer than we think. Listen to all the conversations of our world, those between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf.”

Paul Tournier, *To Understand Each Other*³

Words. It has been said that spoken words never truly disappear; the sound waves they create continue to pulsate through a never quite silent atmosphere. Certainly words do not entirely disappear from either head or heart. Does any adult not harbor a childhood taunt that can still sting with a stunningly fresh bite? “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me,” may be one of the least true playground rhymes ever composed.

¹ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1943), 30, 31.

² Peter Cotterell & Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 46.

³ Paul Tournier, *To Understand Each Other* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1962), 8, 9.

Words, these sturdy, enduring entities, weave their way into the very fabric of life. Hear a mother crooning to her newborn babe, two school friends sharing secrets, a sweetheart whispering endearments into his beloved's ear, sons and daughters bidding tearful good-byes to a dying parent, and one hears the heartbeat of life itself. Words accompany both momentous and commonplace events—the baptismal rite and the lullaby, the marriage ceremony and the marital spat, the commencement, the graduation, and the thousand moments between these two convocations. Therapists state that even the act of marriage, perhaps the most exquisite physical experience God has designed, is greatly enhanced by conversation, hence the expression, “pillow talk.”

People acknowledge the value of words and give testimony to their necessity, yet they also admit to an uneasy relationship with these invisible entities that flow from mouth to ear.

The fact is that because of the enormous complexity of human communication we are practically never in total control of the communication process. We use words that mean slightly different things to different people...we employ gestures that are very open to being misunderstood, and we are all the time unaware of the imprecision of what is being signaled. We think that what we mean is clear. It is rarely so.⁴

Words, these beings that are as pervasive as ants at a picnic, can be just as annoying. A book as ancient as the Proverbs of the Old Testament affirms that the spoken word can have a double-edged effect:

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18)⁵

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. (Proverbs 15:2)

⁴ Cotterell, 15.

⁵ All biblical quotations in this thesis are from *The English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2005) unless otherwise noted.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits. (Proverbs 18:21)

A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back. (Proverbs 29:11)

The letter of James in the New Testament gives this telling description of the tongue:

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:7-10)

Words. To steal the old codger's lament about women, "You can love 'em or hate 'em, but you can't do without 'em." At the Tower of Babel, God confounded people's language, but he did not make them mute. Splintered speech replaced a unified tongue, but tongues continued speaking.⁶ However, universal comprehension had been forfeited by pride, and to this day people find it difficult to understand each other, even when they share the same language. Verbal confusion and mistrust have infiltrated the most intimate of relationships, so certainly marriage is not immune to the Tower of Babel effect. Marriage needs words, thrives on words, but can be destroyed by words. Perhaps there is no other life space in which the chiaroscuro of light and dark words becomes more visible, the symphony of sweet and strident words more resounding. Furthermore, there is perhaps no more fertile soil for misunderstanding to grow than there is in this one flesh union founded in the Garden of Eden. It can be as difficult to coax comprehension out of a marital conversation as it is to wrest a good crop out of rocky New England ground.

⁶ The story of the Tower of Babel can be found in Gen. 11:1-9.

Marriage and the Communication Problem

This mutual misapprehension should be no surprise, because language is complex.

Communication authorities point out that there are six messages occurring whenever two people converse:

1. What you mean to say.
2. What you actually say.
3. What the other person hears.
4. What the other person thinks he hears.
5. What the other person says about what you said.
6. What you think the other person said about what you said.⁷

Carole Mayhall illustrates how these intersecting messages can confuse the husband/wife communication map when she recounts a conversation she and her husband had while gazing at a gorgeous moon together during a romantic evening:

1. What you mean to say: "The moon puts me in a romantic mood."
2. What you actually say: "Isn't that a brilliant moon?"
3. What the other person hears: "The moon is bright."
4. What the other person thinks he hears: "The moon is bright enough for a walk."
5. What the other person says about what you said: "Yes, it's bright enough to shoot a golf ball by."
6. What you think the other person said about what you said: "I don't feel romantic."⁸

And therein lie the makings of a quarrel. Is it any wonder that divorce abounds?

The very difficulties involved in husband/wife communication make it a rich mine for social science researchers to explore, though it is a mine that was originally overlooked.

⁷ H. Norman Wright, *Communication: Key to Your Marriage* (Glendale: G/L Publications, 1974), 53.

⁸ Jack & Carole Mayhall, *Marriage Takes More Than Love* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1978), 67, 68.

It may come as a surprise to realize that very few references to communication—its function and importance—can be found in marriage counseling or functional marriage texts before the mid 1960s. Prior to that time, almost all thinking revolved around individual psycho-dynamics, role functioning, and social structure as they facilitate or inhibit ‘adjustment’ in marriage.⁹

As the dominance of Freudian theory has given way to an emphasis on the self as seen in relation to other selves, the value of understanding and facilitating communication has become more evident. Judith Jordan writes:

Self, other, and the relationship—no longer clearly separated entities but mutually forming—are interconnected rather than in competition in a model of relational movement...The enhancement of the relationship may constitute a greater goal than individual gratification and ironically may lead to greater individual fulfillment (Jordan, 1987). Stated more strongly, perhaps the most basic human need is the need to participate in relationship (Kaplan, 1984).¹⁰

And how can a husband, wife or anyone else “participate in relationship” without some form of communication?

In a survey of couple therapists developed to ascertain predictor variables for marital distress, communication received top ranking.¹¹ It was also rated as one of the five most frequent, difficult, and impacting problems to present itself in therapy.¹² The authors reviewed a similar survey done by Geiss & O’Leary in 1981, and found that communication ranked equally high, though many of the other factors had changed.

Time passes, trends and traditions wax and wane, but it seems to be invariably true that “happiness and good communication [are] likely to occur together in a marriage.”¹³

⁹ Sherod Miller, Ramon Corrales & Daniel B. Wackman, “Recent Progress in Understanding and Facilitating Marital Communication,” *Family Coordinator* 24 no. 212 (April 1975): 143.

¹⁰ Judith V. Jordan, “A Relational Perspective for Understanding Women’s Development,” in *Women’s Growth in Diversity*, ed. Judith V. Jordan (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997), 20.

¹¹ Mark A. Whisman, Amy E. Dixon, Benjamin Johnson, “Therapists’ Perspectives of Couple Problems and Treatment Issues in Couple Therapy,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 11 no. 3 (September 1, 1997): 2, 4.

¹² The other variables were lack of loving feelings, power struggles, affairs, and unrealistic expectations.

¹³ Jean Wilson Houck & Richard W. Daniel, “Husbands’ and Wives’ Views of the Communication in their Marriages,” *Journal of Humanistic Education & Development* 33 no.1 (September 1994): 21.

Sadly, the reverse is also true—poor communication is almost inexorably linked to marital dissatisfaction. It has been shown that “the quality of couples’ initial communication predicts the subsequent quality or stability of their marriage,” though aggression is a better predictor of marital dissolution.¹⁴ In a 1999 study, couples who continued to exhibit disordered communication after four years of marriage scored high on various tests that measure marital dissatisfaction, though they had not yet divorced.¹⁵ Another study that this writer reviewed also highlighted the damaging effects of unhealthy communication upon marriage.

Deficits in observed and self-reported communication skills, particularly those related to management of conflict, are well-established correlates of relationship distress (Christensen & Sherk. 1991; Gottman. 1994; Halford, Hahlweg, & Dunne, 1990; Weiss & Heyman. 1997). More specifically, relative to nondistressed couples, maritally distressed couples showed higher rates of negative verbal and nonverbal behaviors, more coercive escalation, and greater withdrawal from problem-solving interactions with their partners (Weiss & Heyman. 1990, 1997). Furthermore, distressed couples reported more negative cognitions about their partner and their relationship during interactions than did nondistressed couples (Halford & Sanders. 1988; Noller, Beach & Osgarby. 1997).¹⁶

Is the Bible not correct when it states, “...out of the abundance of the heart [one’s] mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45)?

Communication affects marriage, but it has also been shown that marriage, more specifically its breakdown, affects communication. A 1999 study investigating the relationship of parental divorce to engaged couples’ communication, found a positive correlation between divorce of the woman’s parents and “lower rates of positive problem-

¹⁴ Ronald D. Rogge & Thomas N. Bradbury, “Till Violence Does Us Part: The Differing Roles of Communication and Aggression in Predicting Adverse Marital Outcomes,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 67 no.3, (June 1, 1999): 340.

¹⁵ Ibid., 341, 346, 347.

¹⁶ Matthew R. Sanders, W. Kim Halford, Brett C. Behrens, “Parental Divorce and Premarital Couple Communication,” *Journal of Family Psychology*, 13 no.1, (March 1, 1999): 61.

focused behavior and reported higher rates of negative self-referent and lower rates of positive partner-referent, cognitive self-statements.”¹⁷ Understanding the factors that inhibit good communication can be helpful in targeting those couples who may be at risk for marital problems so that they may receive intervention. However, it has been shown that couple communication programs, while definitely beneficial, can have a short shelf life. A meta-analysis of various communication enhancement programs demonstrated that positive results tended to deteriorate over time. Furthermore, though communication behavior may improve, attitude is not always affected. Skills learned and practiced in the laboratory do not always re-root themselves into the home environment.¹⁸ This can leave couples in the unenviable position of “‘having aired their dirty laundry,’ but now lacking the ability to ‘wash it clean,’ to bring about a resolution.”¹⁹ It seems that even when people understand what is involved in good communication, it does not necessarily follow that they will allow facts to percolate into attitudes and actions.

Even when good communication skills are appropriated, a marriage will not improve unless there is a corresponding attitude enhancement. “[L]oving marriages (i.e., those that highly value the qualities of mutual respect, forgiveness, romance, and sensitivity) are most strongly associated with the marital interaction processes of communication and affectional expression.”²⁰ If there is no goodwill, good

¹⁷ Sanders, 67. Contrary to the authors’ hypothesis, the male partners’ parental divorce status had no effect on couple communication. The authors postulate several reasons for this in their study.

¹⁸ Mark H. Butler & Karen S. Wampler, “A Meta-Analytic Update of Research of the Couple Communication Program,” *American Journal of Family Therapy* 27 no. 3, (July-September 1999): 223, 226, 228.

¹⁹ Ibid. 228. Recommendations were made for “booster sessions” to be held at intervals after the initial program. This idea will be discussed further in chapter 5.

²⁰ Jane R. Rosen-Grandon, Jane E. Myers, John A. Hattie, “The Relationship Between Marital Characteristics, Marital Interaction Processes, and Marital Satisfaction,” *Journal of Counseling & Development* 82 no. 1 (2004): 10.

communication will only produce a monster skilled in manipulation and dominance, a situation not likely to enhance marital enjoyment. Barnes and colleagues write:

[R]esearch has failed to address an issue...challeng[ing] the assumption that changing marital communication by itself would be a necessary and sufficient condition for improving marital satisfaction...Noting the importance of the spirit or intentions underlying communication messages, they doubted that effective communication by itself was a panacea.²¹

In a study done to measure the relative effects of positive communication and positive regard, (the therapeutic term for goodwill), it was discovered that “partialing a communication variable from the regard/marital satisfaction relationship reduces the shared variance by *less* than half, but partialing regard from the communication/marital satisfaction relationship reduces the shared variance by somewhat more than half.”²² Thus couples who “profess high regard for each other, but do not perceive it because of a lack of effective communication” may benefit the most from marital education programs, while couples who neither profess nor perceive regard might be better referred to marital therapy.²³

John Gottman has identified four factors that are instrumental in marital dissatisfaction and dissolution.²⁴ He terms them The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse because their presence in marriage is such a powerful predictor of divorce. This writer notes that all four factors involve attitude and/or communication. Criticism, contempt,

²¹ Howard L. Barnes, Walter R. Schumm, Anthony P. Jurich, Stephan R. Bollman, “Marital Satisfaction: Positive Regard versus Effective Communications as Explanatory Variables,” *Journal of Social Psychology* 123 no. 1 (June 1984): 72.

²² *Ibid.*, 75.

²³ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁴ Thomas B. Holman, Mark O. Jarvis, “Hostile, volatile, avoiding and validating couple-conflict types: An investigation of Gottman’s couple-conflict types,” *Personal Relationships* 10 no. 2 (2003): 268.

defensiveness, and withdrawal would be difficult to accomplish without some form of either verbal or non-verbal communication.

“Criticism is defined as “attacking someone’s personality or character—rather than a specific behavior—usually with blame.”²⁵ Contempt and defensiveness, which can be thought of as two sides of the same coin, are terms for “words and thoughts that show a lack of respect for the partner during an emotionally charged situation like an argument.” Finally, withdrawal/stonewalling involves “removing oneself from the interaction in a manner that conveys disapproval, icy distance, and smugness (Gottman, 1994b).”

Here is yet another example of the biblical truth that the heart influences the mouth, and the heart is not always well intentioned.

Communication skills are much easier to study, measure, and improve than are attitudes and intentions. Perhaps this is why so many studies focus on behavior modification. However, something may be lost when a purely skill/behavioral approach to communication enhancement is followed. The behavioral model of marital therapy does not always confirm that lack of skill was the original problem causing the couples’ distress.

An alternative explanation to the skills-deficit model of marital communication is that maritally distressed subjects exhibit negative behaviors because they are feeling negatively toward their spouse and intend to emit these behaviors....Negative intentions toward partners could be accompanied by having a negative reaction to what those partners were saying (‘impact’) and by a perception that the partners had negative intentions toward the subjects (‘perceived intent’).²⁶

²⁵ This quotation and the ones in the remainder of this paragraph are from Holman, 273, 274.

²⁶ Wayne H. Denton, Brant R. Burleson, Douglas H. Sprenkle, “Motivation in Marital Communication: Comparison of Distressed and Nondistressed Husbands and Wives,” *American Journal of Family Therapy* 22 no.1, (spring 1994): 18.

Many studies confirm that distressed partners tend to be more negative in their emotional evaluations of their spouses' verbal messages. Thus a comment such as, "I won't have any pie tonight," can be construed to mean, "You're the worst cook in the world, and your apple pie is particularly lousy," when all that was intended was, "I'm too full for dessert."

The importance of partner response and partner perception demonstrates that communication involves much more than forming words and speaking them. ...An important mechanism that mediates the link between a speaker's self-disclosure and corresponding experience of [non-sexual] intimacy is the degree of partner responsiveness that is perceived by the speaker...Moreover, partner responsiveness... (i.e., understanding, acceptance, validation, caring)... was a more important predictor of intimacy ratings than was self-disclosure.²⁷

To paraphrase the opening line of the Apostle Paul's famous treatise in 1 Corinthians 13, "We may speak with the tongues of men and angels, but if we are not shown love, our marriages may fade away." Many studies indicate that negative behaviors in one partner elicit counterattacking negative behaviors in the other partner (i.e., yelling elicits crying). Yet "no studies have found that positive behaviours of satisfied spouses were more likely to elicit positive responses from their partner" until the authors of a 2000 investigation discovered that synchrony between spouses seemed to enhance positive regard.²⁸

Synchrony is defined as "coincidence between the two partners' respective timings of changes in behaviours, regardless of similarities of behaviours or directions of behaviour changes."²⁹ Synchrony is different from "behavior reciprocity in which behaviours elicit

²⁷ Jean-Philippe Laurenceau, Lisa Feldman Barrett, Michael J. Rovine, "The Interpersonal Process Model of Intimacy in Marriage: A Daily-Diary and Multilevel Modeling Approach," *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19 no.2 (June 2005): 315.

²⁸ Danielle Julien, Mathilde Brault, Elise Chartrand, Jean Begin, "Immediacy Behaviours and Synchrony in Satisfied and Dissatisfied Couples," *Canadian Journal of Behaviour Science* 32 no.2 (April 1, 2000): 84.

²⁹ Ibid., 85. The quoted phrases in the next two sentences are also from this page.

behaviours in kind.” Partners can be “in sync” with each other “even though they do not use exactly the same behaviours.” It was discovered that:

husbands’ changes in body openness were more strongly associated with their wives’ changes in gaze engagement and body openness during the next interval...[and] satisfied wives’ changes in body openness were more strongly associated with their husbands’ changes in body position and in body openness during the next interval....By contrast, dissatisfied spouses’ behaviour changes were more likely to stay unacknowledged, showing the two partners were independent actors in the discussion.³⁰

There is much that can go awry in the communication process. A word does not quite express what a spouse wants it to, that word can be misheard by the other partner, body language can throw up barriers to understanding, and all this can happen while husbands and wives think they are communicating positively. Factor in negative intent for the times when they know they are communicating in ways that wound, and one has, to put it colloquially, “a fine kettle of fish.” That fish stew becomes even ranker when male/female differences are added to the pot.

Male/Female Differences and the Communication Problem

Popular literature screams what social science research only whispers, but it is nevertheless true that men and women are different. This difference may be particularly evident where communication is concerned. Even in happy marriages, “wives tend to report less communication or rate the communication lower than their husbands.”³¹ Researchers found that the positive effect of family satisfaction on wives was more than twice what it was for husbands, and another study discovered that for men, the status of being married was more important than the “emotional quality of the relationship.”³²

³⁰ Ibid., 6.

³¹ Houck, 21.

³² Ibid., 22.

Both men and women use negative communication behaviors, but they tend to favor different ones, and this difference seems to be particularly aggravating to the other spouse. John Gottman observed that men tend to use “stonewalling”, i.e. “not moving the face very much and avoiding eye contact,” while women favor “flooding,” i.e. becoming “emotionally overwhelmed by their partners’ negative affect,” usually evidenced by excessive crying.³³ A review of many communication studies found that “greater polarization with respect to gender role preferences” was strongly linked to “negative marital outcome.”³⁴ Some authors present research attributing communication problems to poorly developed communication skills in husbands, while other authors attest that the problem “may not be that men lack the skills, but that not relating intimately was a male preference rather than an inability.”³⁵ It appears to this writer that changing an innate preference is more difficult to accomplish than developing a new skill, and thus may cause more problems in the marital counseling process. “In fact, an argument has been proposed that male emotional socialization processes result in a form of alexithymia (difficulty identifying and communicating emotions in conjunction with an external orientation) that is actually normative for males....”³⁶

A 2004 study investigating the relationship of marital interaction processes, characteristics, and satisfaction provides further evidence that husbands and wives can view marriage through differently tinted lenses. “For men, loving relationships are more highly influenced by communication than by affectional expression; loyal relationships

³³ Holman, 269.

³⁴ Whisman, 2. The other factors were severe relational problems, increasing age, and greater emotional disengagement.

³⁵ Houck, 22.

³⁶ James V. Cordova, Christina B. Gee, Lisa Z. Warren, “Emotional skillfulness in marriage: Intimacy as a Mediator of the relationship between emotional skillfulness and marital satisfaction,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 24 no. 2 (2005): 222.

are more highly influenced by affectional expression than by sex or consensus.”³⁷ Many studies have uncovered evidence for gender differences in emotional expressiveness, with women being more likely than men to express anger, love, happiness and sadness.³⁸ One reason for this may be that “men have been found to score higher than women on measures of difficulty identifying and communicating emotions (e.g., Carpenter & Addis, 2000).”³⁹ If a husband does not know he is experiencing an emotion, it is unlikely that he will be able to express it. However, other studies have shown that the communication of emotions is more critical to a wife’s marital satisfaction than it is to a husband’s.⁴⁰ What are a bride and groom to do to maintain lasting marital happiness when it seems their very sexuality hinders good communication?

Another area where male/female communication differences have been observed is in divorce. As predicted by researchers in a 1999 study, couples in which the woman’s parents had divorced evidenced many communication problems including “significantly higher rates of negative verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors,...significantly lower rates of positive problem-focused behavior, and reported higher rates of negative self-referent and lower rates of positive partner-referent, cognitive self-statements.”⁴¹ However, the authors of the study were surprised to discover that the man’s parental divorce status was not associated with communication difficulties.

³⁷ Rosen-Grandon, 9, 10.

³⁸ Cordova, 222.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Sanders, 67. The authors posit several reasons for this surprising finding: partner selection effect (i.e., women whose parents have divorced may be more likely to choose an inappropriate partner themselves), the sample of participants, and the assessments used to measure findings (i.e., “Given that women’s communication is more overtly expressive of negativity, the effects of parental divorce on women may be more obvious during a problem-based discussion than the effects of parental divorce on men.”, 968).

Researchers have speculated that wives may be “barometers” for their marriages, “providing a more sensitive indicator of marital distress than do husbands....”⁴² A 1994 study confirmed this hypothesis, demonstrating that wives in distressed marriages rated higher in negativity than their husbands for three motivational variables—message intent, perceived message intent, and perceived message impact.⁴³ Discovering that the wife is “the canary in the mineshaft” may be informative for research, and the development of marital enhancement programs, but it does not do much toward succoring the wife’s pain.

Culture and the Communication Problem

In many ways North American culture, which has made strides toward gender equality, has also contributed to gender confusion and communication disharmony. When husbands and wives unquestioningly allow the idea that “men are from Mars and women are from Venus” to penetrate their thinking, they can be inclined to give up trying to talk to each other. How, after all, can one communicate with a being from another planet? Is it not impossible? The difficulty of dialoguing with a spouse can descend into dissatisfaction, distress, and disgruntlement when the partners unconsciously believe the whole process is hopeless anyway. Medical doctor John Jacobs writes:

The reality is that most of us talk ourselves to death, but we actually communicate very poorly. We live in an era that encourages us to be open about our feelings but doesn’t teach us how to differentiate between helpful and harmful feelings. Very few of us know how to speak or listen effectively. The truth is that brutal honesty often encourages brutality more than honesty. Too often, spouses use their version of the truth to bludgeon their partners into submission. Marital communication is much more than honest speech.⁴⁴

⁴² Denton, 23.

⁴³ Ibid., 1, 19, 22, 23.

⁴⁴ John W. Jacobs, “7 Myths That Can Kill Your Marriage,” *Psychology Today*, 37 no.2 March/April 2004, 38.

When one is subtly taught by society to view a spouse as an enemy alien rather than an interesting cross-cultural experience, it is not surprising that a chat can quickly morph into a spat. Have not science-fiction films and literature been telling the public for decades that the appropriate response to enemy aliens is to battle them? Does not the term “opposite sex,” which people use in a cavalier manner, imply confrontation more than conciliation? Do not book titles like Deborah Tannen’s *You Just Don’t Understand* bear an implicit codicil, *And You Never Will*. The media give much more publicity to a marital spat between stars than it does to a marriage that is doing well. Modern American culture seems to take more delight in maximizing differences and stirring up trouble between the sexes than it does in promoting reconciliation and empathetic understanding.

A delight in conflict is not the only difficulty marital communication encounters from the culture. Much has been written about the dilemmas women face as they balance a multitude of roles and responsibilities, but it has only recently been noted that men can be conflicted and confused as they attempt to navigate the choppy waves of changing cultural expectations.

The guidelines for being a good husband used to be simple: provide, protect, maybe trim the hedges now and then. Now wives still want all that in a mate—and more. Today’s wife wants a confidante and soul mate as well. The requirements changed with no warning, and many husbands feel blindsided. Most men were raised with the idea that making it in the outside world is how you score points at home...But the skills needed to be a successful soldier or CEO are literally antithetical to the caring-sharing sort. Success and even heroism are still measured by a man’s ability to compartmentalize, desensitize, act decisively and sacrifice himself... “There is a fundamental contradiction: If [a man] is successful at work he has really prepared himself to be unsuccessful at home...”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Sean Elder, “The Emperor’s New Woes,” *Psychology Today*, 38 no.2, March/April 2005, 41. The quotation at the end of the selection is from Warren Farrell whom Elder states is the author of *Why Men Earn More* and *Why Men Are the Way They Are*. Elder does not reference the source of the quotation.

To quote the old adage, “What’s a fella to do?” If the very traits that a twenty-first century woman considers essential for success in the bedroom or the family room are the same traits that spell failure in the boardroom, a twenty-first century man is in for a spot of seismic shifting when he walks in the front door each evening.

As has been noted, North American culture values emotional expressiveness but, for a variety of reasons, a man can find this difficult to accomplish. In order to establish his identity, a young boy must separate from his mother in ways that are not required of girls. This “cutting short of boys’ early attachment needs” is often exacerbated by the psychological and/or physical absence of their fathers.⁴⁶ As a boy matures, the playground can teach him that any emotion associated with vulnerability, such as fear or sadness, will not serve him well if expressed. Girls get comforted when they cry; boys get teased. Male adolescents and adults can use sex as a means of assuaging such “supposedly unmanly emotions as loneliness, shame and self-doubt”,⁴⁷ while adolescent girls may be more inclined to use words in companionship with other girls to soothe themselves. As boy grows into man, the pressures placed upon him to bottle up his emotions, and succeed in the workplace at any price can lead to the use of unhealthy defense mechanisms.

Defensive autonomy leads many men to find distance more comfortable than closeness in their relationships with women—and, by extension, their children, acquaintances and coworkers of both sexes. Destructive entitlement, often reinforced by cultural norms of male privilege and superiority, leads many men tacitly to expect that women will give them constant physical and emotional affirmation to make up for their early deprivations, with little or no requirement of reciprocity.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *My Brother’s Keeper; What the Social Sciences Do (and Don’t) Tell Us About Masculinity*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 220.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

All in all, this is not a very healthy environment in which communication can thrive.

Christianity and the Communication Problem

One might hope that Christians would have a mitigating effect upon a culture that pits men and women against each other, and changes the “job descriptions” for husbands and wives without providing the necessary new skills; but sadly this is not always the case. *Men are From Mars; Women are from Venus*⁴⁹ has merely been replaced by *Men are from Israel; Women are from Moab*.⁵⁰ This writer was confirmed in her opinion that the latter title seems to put women in an inferior position to men⁵¹ by Ted Olsen, managing editor of ChristianityToday.com. He writes:

The title suggests that men are closer to God than women are, since Israelites were God’s chosen people and Moabites the pagan offspring of Lot’s incestuousness. The authors spend a lot of time telling men not to lord power over their wives, but one wonders if they are suggesting men have a God-given upper hand, but just shouldn’t act like it.⁵²

Herein lies a major dilemma for conservative Christendom. It cannot agree about how men and women should relate to each other. The idea that the husband is head of the wife is not in contention; that is stated clearly in Ephesians 5:23. The problem arises in the definition and outworking of headship (a word which is not used in the Bible). It is not the writer’s purpose to continue to beat this bruised and bleeding horse except to say that it is probable that a spouse’s theology will affect his or her communication style. If a husband believes it is his prerogative to make all the decisions in the family, he

⁴⁹ John Gray, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

⁵⁰ Norm Wakefield and Jody Brolsma, - (Downers Grove: InterVarsityPress, 2000).

⁵¹ It is probable that this was not authors Norm Wakefield’s and Jody Brolsma’s intent. The book uses the relationship of Ruth, a Moabite, and Boaz, an Israelite, to explore male/female relationships in general.

⁵² Ted Olsen, “What Ruth Talks About When She Talks About Love,” www.beliefnet.com/story/45/story_4519.html Internet; accessed June 12, 2006.

might be less inclined to listen to his wife's opinions. Her disagreement could be seen as mutiny, not healthy dialogue leading to a mutually acceptable solution. If a wife believes submission means she never verbalizes a viewpoint she thinks her husband would dispute, she could waste much emotional energy struggling with false guilt. She could also end up "stuffing" more than expressing, and studies have shown that "self-silencing" does not improve marital communication. Silencing the self is:

so characteristic of women that it contributes to their high rate of depression....Men [can] use [self-silencing] to create distance...and maintain power in a relationship—when they don't talk, their partner is left guessing. When women keep things back, it's for a totally different reason. Many learn that to foster closeness, they must put their partner's needs first.... So to protect his feelings, they hide their own...But everyone who is a high self-silencer feels depressed.⁵³

Christian, even more than secular, women may be likely to fall prey to self-silencing because they are more prone to believe "The Myth of the Unselfish Saint":

The good woman, so this myth goes, cares only for others, disregarding her own needs...To have needs and to respond to them, even by so simple an act as identifying them is the very thing the myth of the good woman forbids them to do. Often for Christian women, this myth is tangled with the idea that taking up one's cross and following Jesus requires the believer to embrace a death to self that entails absolute denial of personal needs and individual preferences.⁵⁴

It will be difficult for a Christian woman to speak to her husband about her emotions, woundedness, and desires, if she believes the Bible enjoins her not to even have such feelings.

Self-silencing is not the only area where theology can affect communication. If a

⁵³ Suzanne Leonard, "Express Yourself," *Psychology Today*, March/April 1996, 20. Part of the article was an interview with Fairhaven College psychologist Dana Jack, Ed.D.

⁵⁴ M. Gay Hubbard, *Women: The Misunderstood Majority*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 26.

Christian husband and wife do not believe that they are equally image bearers of God, it could cause a rift in all their communication processes. This rift could become a place where passive aggression, manipulation, dominance, and patronization would be more likely to flourish. The root of these problem behaviors might remain undiscovered because the spouses would consider such a skewed environment to be the biblical standard.

Often in evangelical circles, a hierarchical pattern for marriage is endorsed as the only Biblical alternative, but this is not necessarily the case.

The Puritans...saw companionship, mutuality, and a certain equality of the sexes as signs of God's grace... "After the Fall, according to the Puritans, chaos tended to break into the covenantal relationship...The fact that paternalistic authority is required to prevent chaos, in the Puritan view, did not compromise the deeper principle of coarchy and coequality in theory. It did compromise it in practice."⁵⁵

Social science research has demonstrated that hierarchy may not be the best paradigm for developing lasting, positive unions. "In a series of studies, couples with equalitarian [sic] power structures were higher in marital satisfaction than were couples with other kinds of power structures (Lu, 1952; Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Rainwater, 1965; Corrales, 1974)."⁵⁶

Furthermore, other bodies of data and theory point toward positive symmetry as an important characteristic of the marital relationship. For example, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973) build a whole body of family therapy on the notion of maintaining a balanced ledger of indebtedness within and between generations. "A balanced relationship promotes healthy individual growth" (p.100). They write further: "The fact that the total end result of the ledger may be unbalanced at any given time is not the crucial determinant of health versus patho-genicity of a relationship....Only fixed, unchangeable imbalance with its

⁵⁵ Alice P. Mathews, M. Gay Hubbard, *Marriage Made in Eden; A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 272, footnote 10, in which the authors quote Max Stackhouse's *Creeeds, Society and Human Rights: A Study in Three Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 95-100.

⁵⁶ Miller, 149. The book referred to in the quotation is I. Boszormenyi-Nagy and G. Spark, *Invisible Loyalties* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

consequent loss of trust and hope should be considered pathogenic (Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, 1973: p. 101).⁵⁷

The above quotation certainly sounds to this writer like the Biblical idea of mutual submission.

Christians' thoughts about headship and submission are not the only ideas that can affect their speech; so can their thoughts about psychology. Christianity and psychology have often eyed each other with suspicion. Sigmund Freud, a father of psychoanalysis, was a self-confessed atheist who considered religion to be a rather unsteady crutch. Many Christians, in turn, have viewed psychology as a system that sets up man as God, dethroning the one true Lord portrayed in the Bible. It is surprising that even today, in a culture that encourages the sharing of problems and the use of medication, conservative Christians often consider it a sign of spiritual weakness to consult a counselor or try any of the many helpful medicines that have been developed in the last few decades.

Compounding the problem, Christian therapists do not always take advantage of the multitude of research studies available to them, not having "a good reputation either as producers or consumers of research."⁵⁸ Since one cannot impart what one does not possess, this means that Christian couples coming to Christian therapists for help are not necessarily being introduced to all the rich resources that might improve their marriages. Furthermore, if Christian therapists are consciously or unconsciously imposing upon their clients their own theologies of what it means to be a good Christian woman, real presenting problems might be dismissed—"Just be a submissive wife, dear, like the Bible

⁵⁷ Ibid., 149,150.

⁵⁸ Hubbard, 112.

says, and you won't have so many complaints about the fact that your husband doesn't talk to you!"

Therapists with less stereotypical concepts of women have been found to view women as stronger and healthier than those therapists with more stereotypic views. Therapists with less stereotypical views have also been found to be more likely to focus on the therapeutic goal of supporting efforts to achieve change in the woman's life rather than emphasizing the woman's adjustment to her life circumstances as she finds them...Therapists who are unwilling to acknowledge that their own belief system influences therapy may seek unconsciously to produce the kind of woman that the therapist believes the woman *should* be.⁵⁹

If Christian spouses' views on theology and psychology can influence communication, how much more will their views on marriage do so? If marriage's chief end is seen as having one's own needs met, a husband or wife is more likely to push their own agenda rather than consider compromise and even self-sacrifice. With this worldview, communication can become "me against you" rather than "us," a scenario which can be disastrous to marriage.

The person who says 'we' the most during an argument puts forward the best solutions, according to a study in *Psychological Science*. 'We'-users may have a sense of shared interest that sparks compromises and other ideas pleasing to both partners. 'You'-sayers, on the contrary, tend to criticize, disagree, justify and otherwise team with negativity.⁶⁰

When marriage's chief end is seen as glorifying God and being an agent of His transforming love in each partner and for the world, then the intent behind communication, which has been shown to be crucial to marital satisfaction, becomes easier to manifest. Communication is enfolded into the "missional" aspect of marriage because two people who know how to speak kindly to each other, even in the midst of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁰ Lauren Aaronson, "We Can Work It Out," *Psychology Today*, March/April 2006, 28.

disagreement, present an eye-catching picture to a self centered, bickering, disgruntled world. Mathews and Hubbard write:

When we speak of marriage as missional, we mean the ways in which marriage as practiced by God's people can be a living demonstration to those who are not his people both of God's love and of the transforming power of the resurrection life. It is in the transformation of our everyday, ordinary life—our sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking-around life, including our marriages—through which God seeks to reach those who have not yet chosen to be his people.⁶¹

A large part of people's "sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking-around" lives is spent in communication. Therefore, though it may be difficult, it is imperative that husbands and wives, especially Christian husbands and wives, learn how to speak, listen, and respond to each other in positive ways. Words make a difference. Those entities that may never entirely disappear from the universe have the power to build up or destroy, hurt or heal. Therefore, they must be used well. Men may be from Mars and women from Venus, but God has placed both sexes here on Earth, so they had better learn to talk together.

⁶¹ Mathews, 25.

Chapter 2

Theological Framework

It is possible that the reader has finished chapter one with a feeling of gloom. He or she is now convinced that poor marital communication is a problem of enormous dimensions. Yet the question remains, "Is there any hope of reducing this problem to manageable proportions?" Can "the elephant in the room" be transformed into a mouse, or better yet, a singing canary? The Bible indicates that the answer is a resounding "yes." The dilemma of husband/wife communication may loom large, but "the breadth and length and height and depth" of the love of Christ is more expansive still (Ephesians 3:18). Does not Jesus assure his followers, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John:16:33)?

God Loves to Communicate within the Trinity

The God who has existed since before time began is no stranger to good communication. He is and always has been a speaking and listening God; his triune nature assumes this. Before there was human, beast, plant, star or even atmosphere, there was Yahweh, in loving relationship and communion within the Trinity. "God is no bare monad, but an eternal fellowship. It is exciting to realize that God did not exist in solitary aloneness from all eternity, prior to the creation of the world and man, but in a blessed communion."⁶²

⁶² J. Kenneth Grider, "The Holy Trinity," in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, ed. Carl F.H. Henry (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 40.

The Trinity, this communal nature of God, provides *raison d'être* for the belief that good communication was designed to be normative for men and women, God's image bearers. Frederick Buechner writes:

The Trinity is a way of saying something about us and the way we experience God. The Trinity is also a way of saying something about God and the way he is within himself, i.e., God does not need the Creation in order to have something to love because within himself love happens. In other words, the love God is is love not as a noun but as a verb. This verb is reflexive as well as transitive.⁶³

Though the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, can evidences of the triune, communicating nature of God be uncovered in its pages?⁶⁴ Genesis 1:26 yields the first hint. After thirteen commands of "Let there be" (Genesis 1:3, 6, 14), "Let them be" (Genesis 1:14, 15), "Let the waters" (Genesis 1:6, 9, 20, 22), "Let the earth" (Genesis 1:11, 24), and "Let birds" (Genesis 1:20, 22), the writer of Genesis makes a noteworthy variation. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Genesis 1:26). For the first time, plural personal pronouns, "us" and "our," are used to refer to God. Though there is scholarly disagreement about whether these pronouns picture the Trinity, it seems plausible to this writer. In the previous verses, God has made entities described as distinct and monolithic: light, an expanse, dry land, plants and animals reproducing after their own kind, sun, moon, and stars. Can it be mere coincidence that when the Genesis author records God making a uniquely image-bearing creature, who is both unified and differentiated, he pictures God in the same unified and differentiated

⁶³ Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1973), 93.

⁶⁴ Since the focus of this thesis is communication, the writer will restrict herself to Trinitarian references that concern this subject.

way? Note from the use of italics the interplay of singular and plural pronouns, an interplay that is found only in these two verses of the creation account:

Then God said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness. And let *them* have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in *his* own image, in the image of God *he* created *him*; male and female he created *them*. (Genesis 1:26,27)

Genesis 3:22 continues the plural pronoun theme as the conclusion of Adam's sorry fall is recounted; "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of *us* in knowing good and evil...'" (italics added). In his pungent, forthright manner, Martin Luther gives his opinion on the verse:

But here the question might be put why God spoke (*of Himself*) in the name of many persons ("*as one of us*"). Nicolaus de Lyra (*French scholar; died at Paris, 1340*) believed that these words were addressed to angels. But this is a worthless explanation, which we reject. From the reading we should rather conclude there is in God a plurality (*of persons*), just as we read in 1:26, "Let us make man in our image." Such passages show both the oneness of the divine essence, for we are told, "The Lord God said," and the plurality of persons, or as we call it, the (*Holy*) Trinity.⁶⁵

The image bearing, united/differentiated nature of Adam's creation is reiterated in Genesis 5:1, where singular and plural concepts are again interwoven; "This is the book of the generations of *Adam*. When God created *man*, he made *him in the likeness of God*. *Male and female* he created *them*, and he blessed *them* and named them *Man*." (italics added) This verse shares another similarity with Genesis 1:26, 27 as it testifies that God and humankind share a unique bond. More than any other part of creation, a person can be studied and tell the observer something about God himself. People, for whom communication is normative behavior, image a communicating God.

⁶⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis*, trans. by J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 86, 87.

Genesis 11:1-9 provides another example of the Trinity-suggesting expression “Let us.” This writer thinks it no coincidence that language is at the heart of the story. People, in their pride, have challenged God’s authority by attempting to build a tower up to him. God asserts his sovereignty by coming down to them and confound their efforts. Note how the writer of Genesis has skillfully and subtly paralleled God’s actions with those of people:⁶⁶

And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” (Genesis 11:3)

“Come let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:4)

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. (Genesis 11:5)

And the Lord said, “...Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” (Genesis 11:7)

So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. (Genesis 11:8, 9, italics and underlining added)

As God confers within himself, the unified, exalted, power base that people wanted to make for themselves is shattered, scattered and turned into Babel, the Hebrew word for confusion. Fortunately, though much time will pass, on the first day of Pentecost after Jesus’ ascension into heaven (Acts 2:1-12), the Holy Spirit declares that this sad incident was not God’s final word in the communication story.⁶⁷

Isaiah provides a further example of God using the first person plural pronoun within the context of communication to reference himself. The prophet Isaiah,

⁶⁶ Note that italics highlight pronouns and underlining highlights man’s and God’s parallel actions.

⁶⁷ On the day of Pentecost, when Jesus’ followers were all together, the Holy Spirit came with a sound like “a mighty rushing wind” (Acts 2:2). Fiery tongues rested on each person, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in languages different from their own. The crowd of devout Jews from many nations, who came together at the sound, was amazed to hear their native languages being spoken by Galileans.

overwhelmed by the majesty of the Lord who has appeared to him, cast down by his own woebegone nature and that of his people, writes, “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *us*?’” (Isaiah 6:8, italics added) Again, there is the interplay of singular and plural pronouns. The plural pronoun could be referring to the angelic host mentioned in verses 2, 6 and 7, but it could just as plausibly refer to the Trinity. Isaiah is not being asked to speak angels’ words, but the words of God himself. It is noteworthy that of all the sinful parts of his humanity Isaiah could have mentioned when confronted with a holy God, the one he chooses is speech. “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips...” (Isaiah 6:5). If communication is a particular sign of humanity’s image-bearing status, then communication gone wrong must be a particular affront to God.

Where might other examples of a God who communicates by nature of his very being exist in Scripture? The New Testament yields a harvest. There is direct, loving, Father-to-Son communication in Mark 1:11 and its parallel verses, Matthew 3:17 and Luke 3:22. “And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:11). This public baptism of Jesus, with its verbal declaration of fatherly love and approval, is followed by a private time initiated by communication from the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness” (Mark 1:12 with parallels in Matthew 4:1 and Luke 4:1). Luke tells the reader that Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit” both when he was led from his Jordan baptism into the wilderness, and when he returned from his desert temptation “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:1,14). This implies an intimacy between Son and Spirit that would include communication.

Each gospel gives accounts of Jesus in prayer.⁶⁸ Luke is particularly fond of informing his readers that Jesus was a praying man. This perfectly righteous one, with no sin of his own to confess, with complete understanding of both God and human, nevertheless consistently sought time alone with his heavenly Father. This practice must have been so noticeable and compelling that even his disciples, not always known for their perspicacity, asked their master to teach them to pray in like manner (Luke 11:1). Jesus desired the sustenance and fellowship that only God could provide. Perhaps if one could have overheard the conversations spoken in lonely places between Father and Son, they would have demonstrated that God loves good communication.

The Gospel of John provides several instances of conversation among the members of the Trinity. John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus, declares, “For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand” (John 3:34, 35). In these two concise verses all three members of the Godhead are referenced, and communication is implied and even directly stated. The Son must hear the Father’s words if he is to speak them (John 12:49) and it is the Spirit who gives these words. All this does not happen in a communication vacuum, but in the life-giving atmosphere generated by the Father’s love for the Son.

Jesus’ teaching in John 14-17, culminating in his high priestly prayer, yields more examples of Trinitarian communication. John 14:10 testifies to intimate, mutual Father-and-Son communication, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in

⁶⁸ Matthew 14:23, with parallels in Mark 6:46 and John 6:15. Matthew 26:36, 39, 42, 44 with parallels in Mark 14:32, 35, 39 and Luke 22:41, 44, 45. Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29 and 22:32. John 17:1-18:1.

me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.”⁶⁹ As Jesus’ prayer continues, he promises, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth...” (John 14:16,17). All three members of the Trinity play a role in these verses and communication is direct or implied. Jesus asks the Father, who gives the Helper, who will testify to the truth, whom Jesus, in John 14:6, declares that he is.

John 14:26 implies that the Holy Spirit listens to the words Jesus is teaching. To comfort them as they face his immanent departure, Jesus tells his disciples, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” To bring to remembrance, one must know what has been said. That the Holy Spirit is both a speaker and a listener is also inferred in John 15:26; “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.” This theme is repeated in verses 13 and 14, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but *whatever he hears he will speak*, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (italics added).

Jesus has spoken of the love between Father and Son throughout chapters 14 through 17 (see footnote 70). The expression of this love, which includes perfect communication, reaches a crescendo in John 17:21-26. Three times Jesus asks his Father

⁶⁹ Jesus also refers to loving communication between the Father and himself in John 14:24b, 14:31, 15:9,10, 15:15, 16:32b, 17:1, and 17:8.

to make his disciples one even as he and the Father he beseeches are one (John 17:21, 22, 23). Jesus wants his disciples down through the ages to be eternally one with him in the same intimate way he and the Father are, and always have been, one (John 17:24). He has spoken of the Father and will continue to do so “that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26). Indeed, there is good and perfect communication within the Trinity.

The gospels are not the only New Testament books to testify to this glorious fact. Paul heartily affirms the Spirit’s wordless communication as the Helper interprets our prayers to the Father and “intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (Romans 8:26, 27). From within the Christian, the Spirit addresses the Father intimately as “Abba,”⁷⁰ encouraging believers to do the same (Galatians 4:6). Continuing the intimate imagery, in 1Corinthians 2:10-13 the intuitive connubial understanding husbands and wives deeply desire but often fail to achieve is described as occurring perfectly between God and the Spirit:

For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

Truly, “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Corinthians 13:14) speak of an eternally communicating being, a Trinity satisfied and complete, with no need for external referents. How can it then be said that good communication is not desirable for men and women, the Trinity’s image bearers? Robert Farrar Capon writes:

⁷⁰ Transliterated from the Aramaic, *abba* is an informal, intimate word, similar to English’s “Daddy” or “Pappa”.

Augustine called the three Persons of the Trinity the *Amans*, the *Amatus*, and the *Amor Mutuus*—the Lover, the Beloved, and the Mutual Love. That’s always given me the perhaps risqué image of the Father making love to his Beloved Wisdom in the bed of the Spirit. Do you see what that does? It turns creation into the pillow talk of the Trinity. From the beginning, it makes the Father’s loving the First Cause of everything. The world becomes not an artifact he sweated over but the apple of his eye. Unlike the popular but depressingly reductionist view of the universe as just so many hot (or cold) rocks drifting aimlessly in a great, black can, it gives us a universe we too can love. It provides us with a reassuring home where we can be participants in a romance rather than spectators of a mindless process. It gives us a party at which we can see ourselves as dancers instead of wallflowers.⁷¹

God Loves to Communicate with His Creation

The communicating nature of the Trinity argues compellingly for good communication among the *imago dei*, but it is not the only point to do so. It can be ascertained that God values good speech because he speaks so often. From the beginning of the Bible when God speaks the universe into existence, to the end when the Spirit and the Bride say, “Come,” and the Son says, “Surely I am coming soon,” (Revelation 22:17, 20) there is a God who communicates with his creation. Phrases such as “God said,” “the Lord said,” and “Jesus said,” are liberally scattered throughout Scripture.⁷² Again and again, both by God and by each other, people are told to pray.⁷³ Psalm 32:6 offers a beautiful example from King David: “Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.” This command to pray is not given because God needs people’s words before he can determine what to do, but because he deeply desires to hear from people

⁷¹ Robert Farrar Capon, *Genesis, The Movie*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 26.

⁷² Accordance finds 303 “Lord said,” 319 “Lord says,” 54 “God said,” 118 “Jesus said.”

⁷³ Some examples (not exhaustive) can be found in Deuteronomy 4:7, 1 Samuel 12:19, 1 Kings 13:6, Jeremiah 29:7, Matthew 5:44, Luke 22:40, Romans 15:30, 1 Thess. 5:17, James 5:13, 1 John 5:16 and Jude 1:20.

and has made them in such a way that it is good for them to speak and listen to him.

David affirms this truth as he continues in Psalm 32:7, “You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.”

A Communicating God Loves People to Communicate Well with Each Other

What Proverbs Says

Speech to God is not the only sort of speech God enjoys. He loves it when people speak in goodly fashion to each other. He considers it part of their responsibility as image bearers. The book of Proverbs abounds with pithy sayings about how people should and should not talk to one another.⁷⁴ When one compares the proverbs about the speech of wise and foolish people, it is impossible to advocate that the Bible has no opinion on what constitutes good communication. The following chart details the differences.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See Appendix A for all the proverbs the writer found which directly relate to speech.

⁷⁵ The proverbs in the following chart are from the New International Version. Some proverbs did not fit easily into opposite pairings but still contrast the communication of wise and foolish people. They are:

accepts commands	10:8	chatters
stores up knowledge	10:14	mouth invites ruin
discerning	16:21	
	17:28	better to keep silent
	18:2	prefers own opinion to understanding
	18:6	lips bring strife
		mouth invites a beating
	18:7	undone by mouth
		lips snare for soul
	19:1	lips are perverse
patient	19:11	
rebuke is valuable as gold	25:12	

<u>The Wise Person</u>		<u>The Foolish Person</u>
listens to advice	12:15	own way seems right
overlooks an insult	12:16	shows annoyance at once
tongue brings healing	12:18	reckless words wound
words bring protection	14:3	words bring punishment
has goodwill	14:9	mocks at repentance
tongue commends knowledge	15:2	mouth gushes folly
lips spread knowledge	15:7	heart unknowledgeable
avoids strife	20:3	quick to quarrel
<u>keeps self under control</u>	<u>29:11</u>	<u>gives full vent to anger</u>

Were they to peruse the above list, the authors of the studies cited in the first chapter would discover that many of their findings had been “scooped” almost three millennia ago in the book of Proverbs. “Running off at the mouth” is as frowned upon in this ancient book as it is today (10:8). A “short fuse” and an unbridled temper are also clearly stated to be foolish behaviors (12:16, 19:11, 20:3, 29:11), statements with which any marriage counselor would be in hearty agreement. Though Proverbs often values silence (10:14, 17:28), especially in comparison with hurtful speech, it is not a book that is opposed to good conversation (12:18, 15:2, 15:7). Finally, woven through these proverbs comparing the communication of wise and foolish people, is an emphasis on giving and receiving good counsel (10:8, 12:15, 15:12). Men and women are not expected to “go it alone,” keeping their problems to themselves, an idea every marital therapist would applaud. As in the Godhead, there is the assumption of supportive community. Words are meant for building one another up, not destroying each other.

Another contrast in speech patterns that modern day researchers would validate is the proverbial comparison between the righteous and the wicked. For variety, this writer presents the differences more poetically than a chart allows:

There are fountains
and then, there are fountains.
Make my mouth a fountain of life
where wisdom freely flows.
Liquid manna.

Not the other
kind. Gushing rank evil.
Foul drops that never slaked a thirst.
Snaring as they are snared
themselves. Perverse.

There are lips and
then, there are lips full fit.
Make my tongue a weighty silver.
Nourishing a heart that
weighs its answers.

Not the other
kind. Lying in wait for
blood. Speaking lies to foolish ears.
Feeding false a heart whose
heft is weightless.⁷⁶

The proverbs from which this poem is created demonstrate that words are valuable and influential. Truly, “a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). Words can make or break a marriage, as study after study has confirmed. Speech is rarely a neutral commodity once one moves beyond small talk. It will either nourish or starve, and it can even poison. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits” (Proverbs 18:21).

⁷⁶ This poem by the writer is based on the Proverbs that compare the speech of the righteous and the wicked: 10:11, 10:20, 10:21, 10:31, 10:32, 12:6, 12:13, 15:28, 17:4, from the New International Version. It may be noted that the lines of each stanza go from 4 to 6 to 8 to 6 to 4 syllables.

Proverbs about the wise and foolish, the righteous and the wicked, are not the only ones to reference communication. This ancient book indicates that there are positive and negative character traits that affect conversation. Though reading the proverbial examples that follow may feel like a roller coaster ride between delight and dismay, they are another indication that God values good speech:⁷⁷

Hatred/Love

“Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs” (Proverbs 10:12).

Deceit/Honesty

“The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful” (Proverbs 12:22).

Derision/Kindness

“Drive out the mocker and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended” (Proverbs 22:10).

“An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up” (Proverbs 12:25).

Gossip/Trustworthy Words

“A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret” (Proverbs 11:13).

“Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down” (Proverbs 26:20).

⁷⁷ The following is a full list of the proverbs that the writer found which speak of positive and negative character traits that influence communication:

Negative and positive Character Traits that Affect Communication

Hatred/Love	10:12 17:9 19:22 27:5
Deceit/ Hypocrisy	10:18 12:19 12:22 15:4 19:22 26:23 26:24-26 26:28
Derision	11:12 22:10
Gossip	11:13 16:28 17:9 18:8 20:19 22:22 26:20
Pride	13:10 27:2
Disharmony/Strife	17:1 17:14 17:19 18:19 21:9 21:19 25:24 22:10 26:21 27:15,16 30:32,33
Words that do not fit the situation	25:20 27:14
Words that are appropriate for the situation	12:25 15:30 16:24 25:11 25:12 27:17
Kindness	12:25
Gentleness	15:1 25:15
Healing	12:18 15:4 16:24
Honesty	12:19 16:13 12:22

Strife/Harmony

“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife” (Proverbs 17:1).

Wounding Words/Healing Words

“Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18).

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit” (Proverbs 15:4).

Inappropriate Words/Apt Words

“Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart” (Proverbs 25:20).

After reading such a list, it is likely that any modern-day marriage counselor would endorse with a rousing amen Proverbs’ conclusions about what constitutes lovely speaking and listening.

A review of Proverbs 18-22 offers ten sayings that describe positive communication. Knowing that humankind is not always wont to act altruistically, they also offer several incentives for good speech.⁷⁸

Characteristics of Pure Speech

Blessing consistently	18:4
Reporting accurately	18:8; 20:19
Listening carefully	18:13
Questioning pointedly	18:17

Incentives to Pure Speech

Peacefulness	18:6-7
Fruitfulness	18:20-21
Richness	20:15
Freedom	21:23

⁷⁸ This chart is taken from: David A. Hubbard, *Proverbs* (The Communicator’s Commentary, Lloyd J. Ogilvie, ed.: Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 271.

If conversations between husbands and wives followed the pattern above, they would be an important element in creating an environment that would cause marriages to flourish. Marital counselors might notice a drop in their clientele, if spousal communication were truly

-flavored with words as refreshing as a bubbling brook in a parched wilderness (Proverbs 18:4),

-entered with intent to lovingly speak truth, not slander (Proverbs 20:19), and

-salted with listening and creative questioning rather than “giv[ing] an answer before [one] hears” (Proverbs 18:13, 17).

It is evident that ancient proverbs such as the above have reached the same conclusions that were highlighted in chapter one by modern researchers such as John Gottman. He “discovered” that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the use of criticism, contempt, defensiveness and withdrawal, can sound the death knell for a marriage. When one considers that a third of the proverbs in chapters 10, 12 and 26 deal with “the power of speech,”⁷⁹ can there be any doubt that the Bible’s writers understood the vital importance of words long before marriage counseling was invented?

The book of Proverbs presents succinct lyrics to one of the melodies hummed throughout the Bible—good communication is crucial. Words are as valuable as the works of the hand, and the heart is as involved in life-giving speech as the lips (Proverbs 12:14, 15:28). Behavior modification therapists may have been surprised to discover that skill training alone was not always sufficient to improve marital communication because

⁷⁹ Kathleen A. Farmer, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes* (International Theological Commentary: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 84.

so often the original intent was to wound the partner, but evil intent is never a surprise to the writers of Scripture. When Jesus declares in Luke 6:45, “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks,” he is affirming the proverbial truths about the speech patterns of the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the wicked.

What the New Testament Says

With its practical wisdom, Proverbs exemplifies the fact that the Bible is not a book that is “so heavenly minded that it’s no earthly good,” as far as understanding communication is concerned, but it is not the only book to do so. The letter of James, often called the wisdom literature of the New Testament by scholars, provides a powerful treatise on the importance of the tongue. In the hands of a skillful rider, a tiny bit controls a mighty stallion. A pilot steers a weighty craft through wind and wave by means of a very small rudder. “So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things” (James 3:5). The tongue can destroy, as a fire destroys a forest, or it can bless. Like onions in a stew, or peppers in a stir-fry, the tongue’s effects cannot be isolated, picked out, and discarded; they are pervasive. The tiny tongue exerts enormous influence over the whole body. The Greek word *σπιλόω* and its cognates, connote a stain that spreads and intrudes (James 3:6). This is not a beautiful dye that brightens the fabric, but a defilement that spoils it.⁸⁰ Ephesians 5:27 and Jude 23 use the word with the same negative meaning.

⁸⁰ Spiros Zodiatas, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1992), 1305.

In order to be “imitators of God” the speech of marriage partners must not be “filthy, foolish or crude,” but rather, it should be characterized by “thanksgiving” (Ephesians 5:1, 4), i.e. “the expression or content of gratitude.”⁸¹ The sort of speech that decorates the fabric of marriage is filled with the “fruit of the Spirit [i.e.] love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control” (Galatians 5:22, 23). This fruit needs to be more in evidence than “bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander” (Ephesians 4:31) because it does not stain; it beautifies. The Bible states that the law is not necessary when the fruit of the Spirit is manifest (Galatians 5:23). By the same token, marriage counselors might not be needed if husbands and wives could “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). The above statements are not pie-in-the-sky platitudes. The Bible acknowledges that talking together is difficult, but it also boldly declares that there is a God who does not leave men and women adrift on a stormy communication sea to navigate their difficulties by themselves.

Men and Women Equally Image God

By asserting that men and women are equal image bearers of the triune, communicating God, the Bible gives impetus for spouses to improve their speech patterns. Neither gender is “off the hook” when it comes to godly speaking and listening. “Hey, I’m a guy, I don’t talk!” is no more acceptable than, “Hey, I’m a gal, I talk too much!” A theology that encourages husbands and wives to take their places beside each other, not above or below each other, can only be beneficial to communication that bears some resemblance to that which takes place within the Trinity.

⁸¹ Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, third edition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 416.

The first thing that God pronounced “not good” in creation was the aloneness of Adam, and Adam’s first response to God’s solution, Eve, was complete delight. The Garden of Eden did not echo with the Adamic cry of “But God, you know men are from Mars and women are from Venus! Why didn’t you make me a guy buddy?” Rather, tree and bird and beast may have laughed along with their first husbandman at his, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh...” (Genesis 2:23). Keil and Delitzsch write:

The design of God in the creation of the woman is perceived by Adam, as soon as he awakes, when the woman is brought to him by God. Without a revelation from God, he discovers in the woman ‘*bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh.*’ The words, ‘*this is now (lit. this time) bone of my bones,*’ etc., are expressive of joyous astonishment at the suitable helpmate....⁸²

God had paraded the beastly creatures before Adam (Genesis 2:19,20), perhaps as a visual aid demonstrating that none was quite fit to be the companion God wanted to give him. Waking from his deep sleep, Adam acknowledges the total rightness of God’s creation. “She shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23). Martin Luther writes, “...everything which the man has, also the woman has. Both are of the same mind and (*full of*) good will toward each other so that the man differs in no other way from the woman than merely by dissimilarity of sex.”⁸³

Unfortunately for good marital communication, the above quote is not the only statement that commentators have made about Adam and Eve. Keil and Delitzsch write, “By this [the creation of Adam before Eve] the priority and superiority of the man, and the dependence of the woman upon the man, are established as an ordinance of divine

⁸² C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, *The Pentateuch*, Vol. I, trans. by James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 90.

⁸³ Luther, 61. Parenthetical, italicized material is part of the quote, not an addition of the writer.

creation.”⁸⁴ Biblical theologies of manhood and womanhood have been repeating such assertions for decades. It seems that Eve and her descendents are sometimes portrayed as easily hoodwinked seductresses who must be kept in line, albeit with love, lest they do any further damage to God’s design, rather than as the co-rulers under God that they are stated to be in Genesis 1:28-30. Has Adam’s original shout of joy, when he recognized Eve as his only true partner, been forgotten, or worse, morphed into theologically-justified suspicion?

It seems significant to this writer that Jesus, God incarnate, does not appear to make much of Adam’s prior creation. When the Pharisees question him about divorce he says, “Because of your hardness of heart he [Moses] wrote you this commandment. But *from the beginning of creation*, ‘God made them male and female’” (Mark 10:5, 6, italics added). ἀπὸ δὲ ἀρχῆς, “from the beginning,” puts the reader in mind of the Septuagint’s opening words, ἐν ἀρχῇ, “in the beginning” (Genesis 1:1), and would appear to indicate that Jesus views humankind’s creation as a seamless sixth day whole, with Genesis 2 as the detailed elaboration. This view might appear to be contradicted by Paul’s statements in 1Timothy 2:13, 14, but as conservative theologian Roger Nicole writes:

...anteriority (prior existence) cannot be held to imply authority over the later arrival, for if it did, (a) animals, having been created before humans on the fifth and sixth days, would have authority over us (Gen. 1:28 states the opposite); (b) primogeniture would give authority over one’s siblings (but the careers of younger brothers like Jacob, Joseph, David, and Solomon, to mention only a few, show the contrary); (c) parents, being always older than their children, would have permanent authority over them (but this is negated in Gen. 2:24; Luke 12:51-53; 14:26; 18:29-30; and (d) an older wife would have permanent authority over her younger husband. Having examined this line of reasoning, it appears that the idea of authority following from anteriority is quite mistaken....

⁸⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, 89.

Nicole continues with thoughts about I Timothy 2:14:

Both Adam and Eve were culpable for yielding to temptation, and Adam—who had heard the prohibition directly from the mouth of God (Gen. 2:17) and had experienced God’s gracious providence overwhelmingly in the creation of Eve—was particularly culpable. But if the counterargument is that (a) Adam was more guilty because he was morally mature and discerning in a way that Eve was not; (b) that Eve’s immaturity had already led to the necessary arrangement of her assuming a quasi-infantile subordinate role and Adam’s assuming a quasi-parental, dominant role; and (c) that all marriages should reflect this, then the reply must be that Gen 2-3 gives no hint of such an arrangement.”⁸⁵

Holding the biblical view that men and women are equally God’s image bearers can enhance communication between husbands and wives. People speak differently to those they perceive as equals than they do to those they perceive as being above or below them in a pecking order. English expressions such as, “Don’t boss me around,” and “Get off my case,” give eloquent, though colloquial testimony to this fact. If a man’s wife is seen as the person who enables him to obey God’s commands, rather than the one who “better bring me my slippers or else,” then he is more likely to listen to her.⁸⁶ “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel” (Proverbs 27:9).

Many scholars have pointed out that the Hebrew word *‘ezer*, helper, which is used to describe Eve in Genesis 2:18 bears no connotation of inferiority: “Certainly no subordination of any sort can be inferred from the use of ‘helper’ to describe Eve.”⁸⁷ More than seventy-five percent of the uses of *‘ezer* in the Old Testament refer to God

⁸⁵ Roger R. Nicole, “The Wisdom of Marriage,” in *The Way of Wisdom*, ed. J. I. Packer & Sven K. Soderlund (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 292,293.

⁸⁶ The writer is indebted for this idea to senior minister Dr. Gordon Hugenburger’s sermon series on Genesis at Park Street Church.

⁸⁷ Nicole, 294.

himself as a helper.⁸⁸ In fact, the status of Eve and her daughters might be considered somewhat exalted, rather than demeaned, because a man is enjoined to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. In a patriarchal society, the father's authority held sway, but in Genesis 2:24, the marriage bond is given precedence. "Far from denoting the idea of service in a subordinated position, the word 'help' ('ezer) is generally applied to God who is par excellence the succor of those in need and in despair. Woman is not a mere tool of physiological or psychological delight. She fulfills a function of creative complementariness."⁸⁹

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann states that in the expression "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," the Hebrew author is conveying more than a mere biological similitude.⁹⁰ The Hebrew word *bsr* conveys both the physical meaning of flesh and the psychological meaning of frailty. Bone, 'sm, is both the literal, hard bone, the last part of the body to deteriorate, and the power to work one's will on his/her environment. "Thus our two words which conventionally appear in English as physical properties of the body need to be rendered in ways that speak of the functioning of the whole organism."⁹¹ Brueggemann states that one might render them "flesh-weakness" and "bone-power." When the two terms are used together, they connote "two extreme possibilities and everything in between them."⁹² Brueggemann believes that the use of this expression denotes a covenant formula, "of abiding loyalty...unaffected by changing

⁸⁸ Ibid. The references Nicole states are Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7,26, 29; Psalms 30:2; 33:20; 70:5; 115:9-11; 121:1-2; 124:8; 146:5; Hosea 13:9. "The cognate word *help* ('ezra) refers to God's help twenty-seven times out of sixty four." Ibid.

⁸⁹ Samuel Terrien, "Toward a Biblical Theology of Womanhood," *Religion in Life* 42 no.3 (Autumn 1973): 322.

⁹⁰ Walter Brueggemann, "Of the Same Flesh and Bone (GN 2,23a)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970): 532-535.

⁹¹ Brueggemann, 534.

⁹² Ibid.

circumstances.”⁹³ Adam and Eve are to be “for” one another, “in sickness and in health,” “through thick and thin,” a truth attested to in marriage vow and homey proverb alike. The idea that “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh” may be covenant language is further strengthened by its association with “leave” (*‘azav*) and “cleave” (*davaq*) in Genesis 2:24. These words are used elsewhere in the Old Testament in reference to covenants.⁹⁴ Thus the point of Genesis 2:23,24 is primarily not one of biological derivation but “commonality of concern, loyalty, and responsibility.”⁹⁵ The original man and woman, husband and wife, are equal partners in the nurture of each other, and the world God has entrusted to their care.

The Bible is not a Misogynist Book

Though this mutual relationship is clear in Genesis 2, there are parts of the Bible, particularly Proverbs, that might at first glance seem to portray “woman” more negatively than “man.” If Genesis states that man and woman are equal image bearers of God, why is the nagging wife of proverbial fame not balanced with the overbearing husband? Why can Proverbs 31 appear to read as if it is advocating the development of “Stepford Wives”? Why is there so much emphasis on “the adulterous woman” leading the naive man astray in the first eight chapters of the book? Does Proverbs undercut this writer’s thesis that husbands and wives should be considered equally beneficial communication partners?

Sometimes translations have created difficulties that are not found in the Hebrew text. The words *zarah* and *nokriya*, which the NIV translates as “adulteress” and

⁹³ Ibid. 535.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 540, the references being Deuteronomy 11:22; 10:20; 13:5; Joshua 23:8; 1 Kings 11:2; Jeremiah 1:26; Hosea 4:10; Leviticus 25:49.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

“wayward wife” in Proverbs 2:16, have the literal meaning of “outsider” and “foreigner.”⁹⁶ The NIV translates *nokriya* as such in Exodus 2:22 and 18:3 in reference to Moses’ son, Gershom, being born “in a foreign land.” It does the same in 1 Kings 11:1 when it states that Solomon “loved many foreign women.” Farmer writes:

...By far the most common usage of *nokriyah* as an adjective applied to women is found in Ezra. When Ezra wanted to free the postexilic community from ‘contaminating’ (non-Yahwistic) influences, he insisted that all marriages with ‘foreign women’ be dissolved (cf. Ezra 10:2, 10, 11, 14, 18, 44).” ...In a similar way, *zarah* usually refers to religious (rather than sexual) infidelity, as in Deut. 32:16 or Ps. 44:20. In Prov. 2:16-19 the woman is said to have forgotten the covenant with her God, lending support to a religious rather than a sexual understanding of her wickedness.

Thus, when they are found in other OT passages the words *nokriyah* and *zarah* refer to ‘otherness’ or ‘alienness,’ in a religious or a cultural and ethnic sense. There are no sexual or moral innuendos inherent in the words themselves. However, it is clear that in this passage, as well as in several other sections of Proverbs, the ‘foreign woman’ plays a seductive role. Here in Proverbs, indirect references to sexual infidelity may be used as a metaphor (as in Hosea) for abandoning the covenant of the LORD...It is also possible that this particular wisdom teacher shares Ezra’s conviction that foreign ways are as tempting to the ‘unwise’ as sexual lures.⁹⁷

Supporting this view, Old Testament scholar David Hubbard writes, “Behind this literal picture of sexual seduction stands a figurative idea of religious compromise...Folly is nothing less than pagan living, foreign to God’s people and fraught with the threat of physical and spiritual ‘death’ ([2:]18).”⁹⁸ John Collins concurs: “The contrast in chap. 9 shows clearly that there is more at issue in the passages that speak of the strange or foolish woman than the specific sin of adultery. This woman represented a whole

⁹⁶ Farmer, 32.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 33.

⁹⁸ Ogilvie, 66.

attitude to life, just as Lady Wisdom does.”⁹⁹ This “foreign woman” who attempts to lure foolish people away from their covenant loyalty to Yahweh is more than contrasted by another woman, Lady Wisdom, whom many scholars think to be an Old Testament type of Christ. Present and participating in creation, assertively beckoning people to leave their folly and follow her, Lady Wisdom presents a very positive picture of the feminine. She is “the wise mother calling her young or an older sister guiding a younger brother (7:4-5)...”¹⁰⁰

The fact that Wisdom, metaphorically portrayed as a woman, is also portrayed in such close association with the Lord¹⁰¹ demonstrates that Proverbs values the feminine. Though patriarchal, it can be argued that Israelite culture did as well, since they valued the Proverbs. Old Testament scholar Claudia Camp writes:

Literature and life operate dialectically, the former expressing, reinforcing, but sometimes challenging the latter. If there were few Deborahs, few wise women, few Huldahs in Israel, one can hardly say that few Israelites had heard of these women. Israel’s experience of woman derived from both literature and life...¹⁰²

Nagging wives and crafty temptresses are not the only women to be given space in this ancient book. Through the literary device of parallelism, a mother’s instruction is shown to be as valuable as a father’s teaching.¹⁰³ Indeed, it is King Lemuel’s mother who instructs him in Proverbs 31, not his father. Not only a mother, but a wife is often shown to be a trusted counselor as well as an effective household manager. Camp writes:

⁹⁹ John J. Collins, *Proverbs/ Ecclesiastes* (Knox Preaching Guides, John H. Hayes, ed.: Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 32.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Proverbs 8:22-31.

¹⁰² Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Bible and Literature Series, David M. Gunn, ed.: Decatur: Almond Press, 1985), 76.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 82. Camp notes that the proverbs where this parallelism can be found are 1:8, 4:1-3, 6:20, 10:1, 15:20, 23:22-25.

All the female figures in the book of Proverbs give advice of some sort, whether it is the nagging of the contentious wife, the seduction of the strange woman, the wisdom of the woman of worth or the truth and justice of personified Wisdom...[A]ll of the women are judged entirely by this particular standard rather than on the basis of their procreative function.¹⁰⁴

The Hebrew word *hayil* adds to the positive Proverbial portrait of women.

Though it is translated “good” (RSV), “excellent” (ESV) and “of noble character” (NIV), scholars such as Kathleen Farmer and Alice Mathews believe “strong” would be a more apt rendering. Keil and Delitzsch note that in Proverbs 31:10 “virtuous” has “the idea of a bodily vigour [and] is spiritualized to that of capacity, ability, and is generalized; in *virtus* the corresponding transition from manliness, and in the originally Romanic ‘*Bravheit*,’ valour to ability, is completed...”¹⁰⁵ *Hayil* is the same word that is sometimes used to describe David’s mighty men. *Hayil* warriors are the best and the bravest, so a *hayil* woman must herself be valiant and mighty. The traits of the woman described in Proverbs 31 are not gender specific. The Bible adjures both men and women to aspire to trustworthiness, shrewdness¹⁰⁶, generosity, diligence, and wise, kind speech.¹⁰⁷ It could be said that Proverbs 31 gives the incarnational view of the Lady Wisdom portrayed in its first nine chapters, just as Jesus incarnates God the Son. If this is the case, then the feminine is being honored in Proverbs even as the writers refuse to idealize it. They do not idealize masculinity either. A hot-tempered man is presented as negatively as a

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 90.

¹⁰⁵ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon* by Franz Delitzsch, trans. by M.G. Easton, Vol. II, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 326.

¹⁰⁶ Shrewdness can have a negative connotation in our culture, but the meaning here is “intelligent, wise, clever.” Prof. Alice Mathews points out that the Proverbs 31 woman “takes advantage, not of people, but of opportunity.”

¹⁰⁷ This interpretation of Prov. 31 was given by Alice Mathews in a lecture during the third residency of the Gordon Conwell Doctor of Ministry program in Effective Ministry to Women, July 2006.

nagging wife.¹⁰⁸ In fact, in proverbs such as 17:1, “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife,” there is the implication that the wife is not the only one who can be quarrelsome. Though several proverbs do decry the contentious woman, they also assert that the *hayil* wife “is the crown of her husband” (Proverbs 12:4), which perhaps implies that she is also an equal image bearer of God.

Though many might contend that the Bible places wives in a degrading subservience to their husbands, this writer believes otherwise. It is hoped that the reader has seen that Adam and Eve, the original husband and wife, existed in Edenic mutuality as fully equal *imago dei* and co-caretakers of the earth under the Lord’s authority. Mutuality was skewed as a result of the fall; this distortion was not part of God’s desired design any more than divorce was (Mark 10:5-9). Just as work would become toil, both in the arena of childbirth and earning a living, so also marital interaction would become a power struggle. Nicole writes:

The battle of the sexes, in which blame is a primary weapon, had begun, as had the bad habit of always trying to excuse oneself. Such attitudes undermined the harmony of their [Adam and Eve’s] relationship and set them at a distance from each other, leading to a struggle for control. God himself indicated as much when he said to the woman, “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (3:16). As the New Geneva Study Bible notes, “The harmony, intimacy and complementarity of the pre-Fall marriage...are corrupted by sin and marred by domination and enforced submission.”

‘to love and to cherish’ becomes ‘To desire and to dominate’...It is widely asserted that in Eden before the fall, Eve was submissive to Adam in the terms of Gen. 3:16 and that this wifely subordination was and remains a fundamental feature of marriage as instituted by God. But that view overlooks the fact that this pattern of domination is first mentioned in Gen. 3:16 as the climax of God’s penal curse on Eve.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Some proverbs that refer to the negative consequences of bad temper are 14:29, 15:18, 17:14, 20:3, 26:21 and 29:11.

¹⁰⁹ Nicole, 284, 295.

The Bible Values Mutuality in Marriage

The Old Testament

Adam and Eve in Eden are not the only ones who etch an illustration of God's original design for marriage. It has already been noted that the woman of Proverbs 31 paints the feminine in a flattering light. More specifically, it pictures a wife who is competent, capable and creative, willing and able to stand beside her husband in the care of their family and interaction with their world. The Song of Solomon is a lyrical expression of the love evidenced in a strong marriage, a love where the wife is an equal, participating partner with the husband.

"As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women. As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men" (Song of Solomon 2:2,3).

"My beloved is mine, and I am his..." (Song of Solomon 2:16). "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 6:3). "I am my beloved's and his desire is for me" (Song of Solomon 7:10).

"My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand...His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. The is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song of Solomon 5:10,16).

"You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me..." (Song of Solomon 6:4,5).

Note that in the last verse, the husband's admiration for his wife is such that he compares her to an army, a very masculine image, and Jerusalem, the most beloved city. She is not a sexual plaything or a servant to be condescended to; she is a desirable and honored spouse. Camp writes:

The presence of the Song in Israel's scripture suggests, then, that the image of a strong, independent woman seeking her lover does not require goddess parallels to be placed in its ancient Near Eastern setting, since such imagery is available in the Song itself, as well as in Egyptian love poetry.

if the love between woman and man was in fact understood in Israel to have this power [the power of love over death] (and there is little reason to doubt, given the canonization of the Song, that it did...), then we can perhaps better comprehend the power of Wisdom the lover, who can defeat death with life for those who love her... The image of the lover has the capacity to draw together the experiences of daily life and the experiences of faith.¹¹⁰

Adam and Eve and the married lovers of the Song of Solomon are not the only marriages that portray strong, *hayil* women in a positive light. Ruth's boldness in approaching Boaz to ask that he marry her is rewarded by Boaz's, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich" (Ruth 3:10). Ruth is called "better than seven sons" and achieves a place in the lineage of the Messiah (Ruth 4:15; Matthew 1:5). Rahab's advice to Joshua's spies allows her and her family to escape Jericho's destruction, and even become part of the Israelite community in so intimate a way that she is mentioned in the lineage of Jesus (Joshua 2; 6:22-25; Matthew 1:5) and the Faith Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11:31). Abigail's initiative is honored when it becomes the vehicle for her to leave her foolish husband when he drops dead, in order to marry David who will soon become king of Israel (1 Samuel 25). Wives are not wimps in the Old Testament. Their advice may be evil, as in the case of Jezebel (1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9), but it is assumed they will give it.

Strong marriages with strong participants are approved by God. Adam and Eve and the lovers portrayed in the Song of Solomon foreshadow the "marriage covenant imagery of the prophets, particularly of Hosea..."¹¹¹ When God commands the prophet to wed the harlot Gomer, who then chases after other men, he is asking Hosea to be a

¹¹⁰ Camp, 99, 111.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 109.

visual picture of the pain he feels when Israel prostitutes herself to other gods. God's relationship with Israel is more than the business partnership of the sovereign with the serf. It is intimate and personal, having the power to wound even the heart of the ruling partner. God says:

Plead with your mother, plead...that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts...she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. (Hosea 1:2, 8)

Though he punishes his beloved bride for her unfaithfulness, he does not reject her forever:

How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?...My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. (Hosea 11:8, 9)

Not only will God "not come in wrath", he will continue to woo his recalcitrant bride until he wins her completely to himself:

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her...And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.'...And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall *know* the Lord. (Hosea 2:14, 16, 19, 20, italics mine)

This "knowing" (ESV) or "acknowledging" (NIV), the Hebrew word *yada'*, is not merely the recognition given to an honored business partner or family member. It is the same word the Old Testament uses for sexual intercourse, the knowing a husband and wife begin to do with one another on their wedding night. The word is first used of Adam and Eve when Cain is conceived (Genesis 4:1). The Septuagint translates it with *γινώσκω*, a word that is also used in the New Testament when Jesus is describing his

relationship with the Father, or when people are startled by the depth of Jesus' knowledge of them.¹¹²

The New Testament

God honors marriage when he uses it to describe the relationship he has with his church (Ephesians 5:21-33). The apostle Paul recognizes this fact. Though considered by some to be the quintessential misogynist, this writer believes that Paul presents a view of marriage in which mutuality is valued, and good communication is bound to thrive. The Greco-Roman world into which Christianity was birthed did not share this view.¹¹³ Rather than modeling the passionate love of God for his church, marriage was seen as a microcosm of the city-state, existing primarily for its good. There was almost universal agreement among the ancient Greek philosophers that if marriage's chief goal was to serve the state, it could best do so by producing healthy children. A man sought a wife, not primarily for sexual pleasure, but to produce legitimate heirs. Therefore, chastity was extolled as a cardinal virtue for women, though not necessarily for men, as this famous (infamous?) quote attributed to Demosthenes indicates: "We have courtesans for pleasure, concubines to look after the day-to-day needs of the body, wives that we may breed legitimate children and have a trusty warden of what we have in the house."¹¹⁴ A wife functioned as the incubator of her husband's future and if she did not produce healthy male offspring, Roman law allowed him to divorce her. This practice was more

¹¹² See John 8:52-55 (the Jews accuse Jesus of having a demon) and John 1:47-50 (the calling of Nathanael).

¹¹³ The thoughts in the remainder of this paragraph are quoted from a paper the writer submitted for a class on Ephesians taught by Prof. Roy Ciampa at Gordon-Conwell Seminary in the Spring of 2005.

¹¹⁴ Demosthenes 59.118-22 quoted in Russ Dudrey, "'Submit Yourselves to One Another': A Socio-Historic Look at the Household Code of Ephesians 5:15-6:9," *Restoration Quarterly* 41 no. 1 (1999): 28.

lenient than the rabbinic law of the day, which required a man to divorce his wife after ten years if there had been no children from the union.¹¹⁵

Into this setting splashes the new wine of Paul's reworking of the household codes of his day.¹¹⁶ There has been debate among scholars as to whether Greco-Roman or Jewish literature has had more influence on the New Testament *Haustafeln*,¹¹⁷ but for the purposes of this thesis the question is moot. Suffice it to say that Paul is not conjuring the three household pairs of husband/wife, parent/child and master/slave out of thin air. The couplings will not sound new to the ears of either his Jewish or Gentile audiences. What is new is the meaning Paul infuses into these traditional household groupings.

How are the Christian *Haustafeln* different from earlier literature? Paul's codes are more intimate, less abstract than the Greco-Roman treatises, which seem to be philosophizing on an ideal while Paul is pastoring real people trying to live faithfully in a real and not always sympathetic world. The extra-Biblical codes do not use direct address; Paul does. Even more unusual, he instructs both halves of each pair. There is some reciprocity in the Neopythagorean literature. Philo and Josephus acknowledge that husbands should not be overly harsh, but no one upholds reciprocity to the extent that Paul does. Christ and his love for the church, his body, infuse Paul's *Haustafeln*, while the other codes are for the most part anchored in the seen, even if idealized, world, though Jewish instruction does bring in the fear of the Lord. Some scholars argue that the

¹¹⁵ C. S. Keener, "Marriage" in Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

¹¹⁶ The following ideas on household codes were first developed by the writer for a paper entitled "Paul's Ephesian Household Code; New Wine or Old Wineskin?" for the class "Women in the Early Church" taught by Dr. Catherine Kroeger at Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Spring 2005.

¹¹⁷ *Haustafel* is the word Martin Luther used for household code. The plural is *Haustafeln*.

Christian *Haustafeln* point toward a redemptive way of life too radical to be fully expressed in the culture of Paul's day without damaging the presentation and spread of the gospel. Perhaps this is why the apostle only hints at it. Yet the hints are not so obscure that the modern reader cannot recognize them.

One hint is found in Paul's grammar. Ephesians 5:22 has no verb in the Greek; translators must look to the preceding verse and borrow *ὑποτασσόμενοι*, "submitting." Many scholars believe that the whole household code is a specific example of the general "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21) as it relates to the people who would be living under one roof at the time Paul was writing. This may be the reason why Ephesians 5:22-6:9 is the only major section of Ephesians that is not introduced by a conjunction.¹¹⁸ Grammarian Daniel Wallace states that the household code should be viewed as a parenthetical statement that does not advance the argument of the book, thus the lack of a conjunction.¹¹⁹ This writer would agree, while adding that though it may not advance the argument, the *Haustafel* certainly does "put feet on it."

By placing the *Haustafel* of Ephesians directly after the phrase *ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ*, this writer believes Paul may be stating a new truth within the old structure of the household code. Without advocating social revolution, Paul may be presenting a model for the home that is significantly different from the Greco-Roman and even Judaic codes of his day wherein the subordinate members of the household circle the *paterfamilias* like moons around a planet, held captive and controlled by the force of his "gravity."

¹¹⁸ Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 651. Even if one considers the section to begin at 5:21, as this writer does, this would still be true.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 651 footnote 94.

Along with the placement of the *Haustafel* directly after *ὑποτασσόμενοι* in Ephesians 5:21, the context of Paul's use of headship language¹²⁰ adds weight to the idea that this household code is different from that of contemporaries. Paul is the only New Testament author to use *κεφαλή*, head, in the language of imagery. In Colossians 1:18, Christ "is also the head of the body, the church..." and in 2:19 Christ is the head "...from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God." New Testament scholar Gregory Dawes thinks that *κεφαλή* can best be understood in the Ephesian *Haustafel* if it is considered as a metaphor. A metaphor is dependent on the literal sense of a word, but goes beyond it to create a mental picture that gives new information about its analogous subject. For instance, "That fox, Herod" would not mean much to Jesus' listeners if they knew nothing about foxes. Dawes believes *κεφαλή* is a "living" metaphor in this passage; the imagery has not been so overused as a comparison that it has developed its own literalness, becoming what Dawes calls a "dead" metaphor, i.e. "see" in the English expression "I see your point."¹²¹ This leads him to the conclusion that *κεφαλή* means neither "over-lord" nor "source" in Ephesians 5:23, but "head" in the metaphorical sense. He notes that *κεφαλή* is always used with *σῶμα*, body, in Ephesians, and while *σῶμα* is sometimes used literally when it stands alone, as in 5:28, it is always metaphorical when used with *κεφαλή*.¹²²

Though Dawes asserts that "authority" is the metaphorical idea Paul wants to

¹²⁰ The debate over *κεφαλή* has been significant and sometimes heated in recent years. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to review it all.

¹²¹ Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question; Metaphor & Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33*, (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 123.

¹²² Ibid. 166

communicate by comparing husband and Christ as "head" of his own wife and the church respectively, he also states:

in the words which are addressed to husbands (vv 25-32), the husband is invited to compare himself to Christ, *not under the rubric of 'headship' as a metaphor for authority), but rather under that of 'love' (in the sense of the love of Christ)*. In this way (and as many commentators have noted) at least one possibly misleading implication of the 'headship' metaphor is avoided: the implication that the authority of the husband could be tyrannical"¹²³ (emphasis added).

Dawes thinks that in the other two references to κεφαλῇ in Ephesians, one leans toward the metaphor of authority (1:15-23) and one toward what this writer thinks sounds like source (4:7-16) but which Dawes calls the intimate and organic relationship Christ has with the church, his body, as opposed to his relationship with the entire cosmos which is also under his authority.¹²⁴

John Toews presents another slightly different perspective. He states that in Ephesians 1:22 Christ is made "prime minister" of the cosmos (this is what the ancients would have taken "to sit at the right hand" to mean) and in 4:15 Christ as prime minister:

expresses his kingship in the world by distributing gifts....In 5:23 the husband is defined as the head of the wife. "Traditional" interpreters read "head" as a power term here. "Liberationist" interpreters read it as source language. I see it as a political word that means power or authority because of its other uses in Ephesians. The meaning of this power language, however, is radically re-defined by the example of Christ, a point that is missed if headship is defined as source.¹²⁵

Toews believes that the sandwiching of this part of the *Haustafel* between 5:21 and 5:33 shows that the passage is concerned with "issues of reverence and respect in the

¹²³ Ibid. 138.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 138-149.

¹²⁵ John E. Toews, "Paul's Radical Vision for the Family," *Direction* 19 no.1 (Spring 1990), 31.

household."¹²⁶ In fact, this writer wondered if 5:21 and 33 might be functioning as two ends of a chiasm bracketing the instruction to husbands and wives.¹²⁷

Toews states that Paul is advocating a new definition of marriage, even though he thinks the apostle uses *κεφαλή* to mean "authority." He notes that the only commands in the pericope are to the husband. "The sharpness of Paul's address to the husbands in comparison with the soft manner of encouraging the wives indicates that Paul considers the men more reluctant to show love for their wives than for the wives to subordinate themselves to their husbands."¹²⁸ This writer has long believed that the statements Paul chooses to make about Christ in Ephesians 5:23-26 have been undervalued as they affect an understanding of *κεφαλή*, so she was pleased with Toews' statement that in 5:25; "It is not Jesus' power, lordship, or authority that is upheld as the model, but his humility and servanthood."¹²⁹ Is it significant that Paul refers to Christ as the "Savior of the body" in 5:23? It is known from the paeans of praise in the first chapters of Ephesians and Colossians that Paul knows many titles he could use for Christ. Why does he pick Savior here in this *Haustafel*? The writer wonders if it is because "Savior" captures in a word the nurturing, servant-hearted lordship of Jesus. As Toews writes:

Headship language is turned on its head. Power is redefined as love and self-giving, not as exercising authority over another person...Paul has no theology of orders. The only order for Paul is the Christ-centered one. The Christ-church relation is Paul's substitute for the law of marriage...The logic of the husband's loving his wife is important. The movement is not from love of self to love of wife to love of Christ. Rather, it is from the love shown by Christ, to the love shown for the wife to the love of the husband for himself. This way of thinking about marriage was radical in Paul's day, as it is in the twentieth century.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid. 32.

¹²⁷ She found no other reference to this possibility, so she is probably wrong.

¹²⁸ Toews, 36.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 35.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 35, 37.

Paul is not necessarily promoting the traditional household structure outlined in the *Haustafeln*; he is assuming it. William Herzog writes that Paul is proclaiming four “new world” or kingdom truths through the “old world” structure of the household codes: “mutuality, role responsibility, creation intent and Christological model.”¹³¹ Paul’s injunction for husbands to love their wives may seem obvious and even tepid to modern readers, but in a world where wives were for siring heirs and concubines were for pleasure, Paul’s resocializing call for husbandly role responsibility would have been startling. His entwining of the husband-wife relationship with that of Christ and the church would also have been new information indicating that he is not calling for an authoritarian marital relationship, “for Christ who is the head of the church is the same Christ who ‘emptied himself, taking the form of a servant’ (Philippians 2:7) and humbled himself in his obedience.”¹³²

At first glance, moderns may be tempted to pooh-pooh the Pauline *Haustafeln* as antiquated and chauvinist, but a more studied gaze reveals that though the “cage” may be the same, the gospel is rattling it. Stephen Motyer affirms the idea that the Pauline household codes are breaking new ground. “It is universally recognized that there is no precise parallel to the *Haustafel* form as it appears in Colossians and Ephesians, with its neat reciprocal pairs, and its ‘Address--Admonition--Reason’ structure. There are forebears, but plainly some particular midwife was at work to bring this distinctively Christian offspring to birth.”¹³³ Agreeing with Herzog, Motyer affirms the importance of

¹³¹ William H. Herzog, “The ‘Household Duties’ Passages; Apostolic Traditions and Contemporary Concerns,” *Foundations* 24 (Jl-S 1981), 205.

¹³² Ibid. 214.

¹³³ Stephen Motyer, “The Relationship between Paul’s Gospel of ‘All One in Christ Jesus’ (Galatians 3:28) and the ‘household codes’”, *Vox Evangelica* 19 (1989), 43.

the parallels between husband and wife and Christ and the church. He believes Ephesians 5:22 requires the mutual submission of all who live "in the fear of Christ."

It is the submission of service, displayed by Christ in leaving his father for the sake of the church (thus providing a model for the husband, who likewise leaves his parental home for his wife), and displayed by the church in enjoying and preserving the unity with Christ which resulted from his self-giving (thus providing a model for the wife...)¹³⁴

The writer believes that Paul's resounding declaration in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," and the *Haustafeln* of Ephesians and Colossians are a continuum of the "already-not-yet" that are so often portrayed in Scripture.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the reader is now not only convinced that communication between husbands and wives can present serious problems, but that the Bible provides the basis for solutions that are applicable in today's world. From alpha to omega, Scripture displays a communicating God, a God who has always been in loving communion among Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He also is a God who loves to communicate with his creation, and loves to see people communicating well among themselves. He has made man and woman in his image so they have the power to speak, listen and understand. He has made them equal image bearers so they do not have to "talk down" to each other or "talk at" each other, but have the potential to talk with each other. Scripture is rich with thoughts about speaking and listening. The power of the tongue and the influence of the heart are both recognized.

Men are not from Mars, nor are women from Venus; their similarities outnumber

¹³⁴ Ibid. 43.

their differences, as Adam's joyous response to Eve indicates. Thus there is reason to believe husbands and wives can learn to "speak the same language" or at least become effective translators. Though the Bible is often accused of being a misogynist book, it is hoped the reader has been persuaded this is not the case. There are strong feminine models who are positively portrayed in Scripture. Marriage is presented as God's design, meant to mirror his love for his body, the church, and bless both husband and wife as they mutually submit to one another. In this loving atmosphere, good communication can thrive. Forgiveness can be asked for and received. Empathy can be extended. Skills can be learned and intent can be submitted to a loving Lord for his reshaping. The living Word lights the way for loving words to grow and flourish.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

The problem of husband/wife communication has been confirmed; the framework for a theological solution has been erected; now, to quote that formidable sleuth Sherlock Holmes, “The game’s afoot!” It is time to “get practical.” What resources are available to people in ministry who want to help marriages not merely survive, but thrive? How can the church facilitate good communication without reinventing the wheel? There are many “literature clues” available to the investigator who knows where to look.

Marriage

Before targeting communication between husband and wife, it can be beneficial to develop a holistic understanding of marriage. However, reviewing books about marriage could be a thesis in itself. Therefore it will be the writer’s goal to highlight excellent marriage books that the reader might overlook, either because they were written some time ago or because they have not been highly publicized in Christian circles. *Married for Good* and *Marriage Spirituality* by Paul Stevens rank at the top of this writer’s personal favorites.¹³⁵ In *Married for Good*, Stevens gives a very theological, yet user-friendly explanation of marriage as a covenant. He goes on to explore six types of love that make marriage thrive. He defines them as *agape*—serving love, *philia*—friendship love, *eros*—passionate love, *racham*—kinship love, *ahaba*—courting love, and *hesed*—covenant love.¹³⁶ This discussion is followed by a thought-provoking chapter considering

¹³⁵ Paul Stevens. *Married for Good*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986) and *Marriage Spirituality*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989).

¹³⁶ An elaboration of these six loves is found in chapter 4 of *Married for Good*.

The Ten Commandments in terms of marriage. For instance, “You shall not steal,” becomes “Live in true community but give privacy,” and “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor,” becomes “Be a faithful communicator.”¹³⁷

Stevens is not afraid to tackle the problem of headship, doing so both biblically and creatively. When this writer read his arguments for the first time years ago, it was a “Eureka” moment for her. It was the first time she saw that one could embrace headship but not hierarchy and still be faithful to the meaning of the texts in question. To quote Stevens:

The head-body language of Paul is not primarily a language of authority but of unity and interdependence...Headship is not a role but a relational process...Paul is declaring that power, control, politics and compliance are abolished within marriage once and for all. The new humanity out-revolutionizes the liberation movement by eliminating the need to talk about rights.¹³⁸

Stevens is not starry-eyed about marriage. The last section of *Married for Good*, entitled “Renovating,” counsels readers what to do when the marriage is “worse” rather than “better.” In *Marriage Spirituality* he details ten disciplines couples can practice together in order to keep their marriages from descending from better to worse. His chapter about conversation, subtitled “Listening to the Heart,” talks about developing “soul intimacy” by learning to listen to one another as “spiritual friends.”¹³⁹ Husbands and wives are meant to be keepers of each other’s souls; therefore each has a responsibility to create an environment in which the other can flourish. With the practice of habits such as keeping the Sabbath joyfully together, mutual submission, confession, and “the surgery of forgiveness,”¹⁴⁰ marriages can become healthy and strong.

¹³⁷ *Married for Good*. Chapter 6.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 125, 126, 127, 128.

¹³⁹ *Marriage Spirituality*. Chapter 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 131.

Each of Stevens' books could easily be used as a study guide for a couples group; so could *The Marriage Book* by Nicky and Sila Lee.¹⁴¹ In fact, it can be purchased with an accompanying video and study guide from Alpha Resources. *The Marriage Book* is eminently practical. No theory here, just engaging stories woven with sound, biblically grounded advice on concrete topics such as communication, conflict, parents and in-laws, and sex. The Lees, who share their own story in the Introduction, effectively use many quotes from secular literature and media in a manner seldom found in Christian books written for the popular market. Writing a decade after Stevens, they stand with him in communicating delight in the mutuality of marriage and commitment to seeing it flourish.

It would be remiss to exclude the works of John Gottman from this brief survey of general marriage books. One of the pioneers in applying the techniques of scientific research to marriage, Gottman has spent over thirty years studying couples. He and his team currently do this in what has affectionately been dubbed "The Love Lab," a fabricated apartment with video cameras and one-way glass walls where miked couples spend time trying to act as naturally as possible. It is probable that every social science journal has published several of Gottman's studies over the years, but the layperson can find much of his work summed up in his best selling *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*¹⁴²

Christians need not avoid this book because it is secular. Gottman has devoted his career to helping marriages succeed and his seven principles do not contradict biblical teachings. For instance, "Principle 3: Turn Toward Each Other Instead of Away" stresses

¹⁴¹Nicky & Sila Lee. *The Marriage Book*, (New York: Alpha International, 2000).

¹⁴² John M. Gottman and Nan Silver. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999).

the importance of letting “your spouse know he or she is valued during the grind of everyday life.”¹⁴³ Romantic dinners are wonderful but they do not provide enough fuel to keep a marriage warm. There must be the daily kindling of attitudes like genuine interest, affection, the validating of each other’s emotions, and the willingness to take one’s mate’s side if the marital fire is to be kept glowing. *The Seven Principles* is punctuated with appealing, practical exercises and empathy-inducing case studies designed to do just that.

Communication in Marriage

Moving from the general to the specific, the writer would like to highlight another book by John Gottman, *A Couple’s Guide to Communication*.¹⁴⁴ This volume is an effective bridge between sociological research and practical advice for the layperson. In their “Preface for the Professional,” Gottman and his colleagues describe the many studies that have formed the basis of the exercises they have developed to improve communication between husbands and wives. They offer hope to distressed couples because their findings indicate that both happy and unhappy marriages share the same sorts of problems. Dissatisfaction usually occurs in the perception and handling of these problems. While difficulties may not be made to disappear, they can be exacerbated or ameliorated by the way husbands and wives approach them. Therefore willing spouses can truly benefit from effective teaching in areas such as conflict resolution, expressing needs, and acknowledging hidden agendas.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 80.

¹⁴⁴ John Gottman, Cliff Notarius, Jonni Gonso & Howard Markman. *A Couple’s Guide to Communication*, (Champaign: Research Press, 1976).

Fortunately for the church, Gottman and his team are effective teachers in the relationship realm. Pastors need not feel they must pursue a Ph.D. in sociology in order to help their congregations improve their marriages. They need only “stand on the shoulders” of these research “giants” and provide venues for couple communication practice. The teaching is so specific, down-to-earth, and clearly explained that little pastor preparation is necessary. The exercises are winsome, almost playful, and are presented in such a positive, “can-do” manner that even the most depressed couple might be cheered into giving them a try.¹⁴⁵ Gottman considers sexual intercourse a communication act, so there is a very helpful and frank chapter dealing with problems that might occur in this area. Again, Christians need not fear delving into this researcher’s books. It is clear that the man likes marriage and wants to see couples move out of frustration and into satisfaction. Would not the Lord, the Maker of marriage, approve?

If John Gottman is marriage’s nuts-and-bolts man, then Paul Tournier is its troubadour. His tiny gem, *To Understand Each Other*,¹⁴⁶ weighs in at only sixty-three pages, but it packs a powerful punch, speaking both to the difficulty and necessity for good marital communication. Tournier, a Christian physician who became a psychiatrist, writes with a poet’s soul. His assertion that most conversations are “dialogues of the deaf”¹⁴⁷ is one this writer has never forgotten. For true marital understanding to occur, Tournier believes partners must develop the will to understand each other. Once one spouse considers he/she knows the other completely, “courtship’s beautiful curiosity has

¹⁴⁵ The writer found this to be true of all the John Gottman books that she reviewed.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Tournier. *To Understand Each Other*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 9.

been lost. The thirst for discovery and for understanding has been dried up.”¹⁴⁸ Self-expression, courage, love, and admitting and accepting each other’s differences must be practiced if understanding is to flourish. Tournier writes that gender differences exist but are not insurmountable; indeed, no problem is insurmountable when partners practice personal submission to Jesus Christ.

Writing at the same time as Paul Tournier, H. Norman Wright has composed a practical guide to improving marital communication with which Tournier would have probably agreed. *Communication: Key to Your Marriage*¹⁴⁹ is a humorous yet solidly biblical book that is designed for couples to use together as a workbook. Intermingled with cartoons, lists, and biblical exhortation, *Communication* is a pleasant yet still challenging read. This writer was impressed by the gender neutrality of the author. For instance, wives were not targeted as being the nags in the relationship; instead Wright titles his section on the subject, “Confucius Say, ‘Spouse with Horse Sense Never Becomes Nag’”¹⁵⁰ In a sound-byte world, Wright’s short, pithy communication principles may be just the “latte” couples on-the-go need to refresh their marriages.

Social Science Research on Male/Female Communication

Moving to a field which may seem less “latte” than lima bean, the writer would like to highlight one book and three journal articles that study men and women in communication. Elizabeth Aries’ *Men and Women in Interaction*¹⁵¹ is by no means light reading, but for the motivated layperson it provides a wealth of stereotype-busting information. Aries demonstrates how data from social science research can be

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 15.

¹⁴⁹ H. Norman Wright. *Communication: Key to Your Marriage*, (Glendale: G.L. Publications, 1974).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 173.

¹⁵¹ Elizabeth Aries. *Men and Women in Interaction; Reconsidering the Differences*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Aries is a professor of psychology at Yale University.

misinterpreted by the general public, making gender differences seem more pronounced than they actually are. For instance, she cites an oft-quoted study by Zimmerman and West that appeared to show that men interrupt more often than women do because they are the dominant partners in the conversation. However, the sample was extremely small (seven instances of interruptions) and no attempt was made to analyze the multiple function of interruptions or their situational context. The authors of the study have not tried to hide anything; it is merely that if a reporter wants to cover the findings for the public, a headline of “Men Boss with their Mouths” is more attention getting than “Do You Interrupt More at the Office or Around the Dinner Table?”

Aries provides much evidence demonstrating that gender is not the only factor affecting how men and women speak to each other. Status, role, class, and situational context all play as important a part as gender does, yet their effects have not always been noted by researchers. Furthermore, gender stereotyping may have as great an influence as gender itself. As Aries writes, “Beliefs about men and women have a reality and power of their own...sex differences may reside in the eye of the beholder rather than in individuals themselves.”¹⁵²

A journal article that could also be classified as hearty soup rather than soda pop is “Emotional skillfulness in marriage: intimacy as a mediator of the relationship between emotional skillfulness and marital satisfaction,” by James Cordova, Christina Gee, and Lisa Warren.¹⁵³ These researchers tested the theory that emotional skillfulness, which they define as the ability to identify and effectively communicate emotions, enhances

¹⁵² Ibid. 17, 18.

¹⁵³ James Cordova, Christina Gee, and Lisa Warren, “Emotional skillfulness in marriage: intimacy as a mediator of the relationship between emotional skillfulness and marital satisfaction,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 24 no. 2 (2005).

marital intimacy and thus marital health. Empathy is crucial in the development of emotional skillfulness. Though it is not an emotion in itself; empathy enhances marital safety because it is the wise use of emotion in the attempt to understand another's experience. When emotional sharing is validated rather than rebuked, more sharing will take place. It was found that men have more difficulty identifying their emotions than women do, and therefore more difficulty communicating them. It was also discovered that women's marital satisfaction is more dependent on the man's identifying and communicating. This is a potentially volatile, Catch-22 situation for husbands and wives, but it is also a place where the church can be of assistance as it provides the opportunity for attitudinal and behavioral enhancement.

Thomas Holman and Mark Jarvis' study dovetails well with Cordova, Gee and Warren's findings, as it does with biblical teachings. "Hostile, volatile, avoiding, and validating couple-conflict types: An investigation of Gottman's couple-conflict types,"¹⁵⁴ comes to the opposite conclusion of Leo Tolstoy in his first sentence of *Anna Karenina*, "All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."¹⁵⁵ Holmes and Jarvis discovered that "validating, volatile and conflict-avoiding"¹⁵⁶ couples could all achieve marital satisfaction even though their conflict styles were quite different. Trouble comes when what John Gottman has dubbed the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse gallop upon the scene. Criticism, contempt, defensiveness and withdrawal are devastating weapons to use in marital conflict. Surprisingly, so is flooding, defined

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Holman and Mark Jarvis, "Hostile, volatile, avoiding, and validating couple-conflict types: An investigation of Gottman's couple-conflict types," *Personal Relationships* 10 no. 2 (2003).

¹⁵⁵ Leo Tolstoy. *Anna Karenina*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Valokhonsky (New York: Penguin Press, 2002), 1.

¹⁵⁶ Holmes and Jarvis, 268.

as excessive crying, which is ranked a strategy as unhelpful as yelling. It was also found that, under conditions of stress, it was sometimes useful to borrow from other conflict styles that a couple might not usually utilize, if only to grab the other partner's attention. These sorts of findings can serve as a warning to the church when it is tempted to stuff couples into some prescribed, Christian-cookie-cutter mold. When there is affirmation, respect and emotional validation, lots of styles can work.

Rounding out this threesome is Sherod Miller, Ramon Corrales, and Daniel B. Wackman's "Recent Progress in Understanding and Facilitating Marital Communication."¹⁵⁷ These researchers remind readers that marriage counseling is not just for those couples who are about to split. It is for all couples who wish to enrich their unions. In other words, marriage counseling does not just repair, it equips. One way it does this is by highlighting the important, but often forgotten fact that how one talks is as important as what one says and what one omits is as crucial as what one includes in a conversation with a spouse.

These researchers stated in 1975 what is still being demonstrated in studies today. If one focuses only on skill enhancement in counseling, a hole in the marital abode will still remain. Intent must not be overlooked. "That is, by the way people communicate to each other, they are demonstrating their intent to maintain and build, or to destroy, their own and the other person's esteem."¹⁵⁸ When there is "positive symmetry in husband-wife input,"¹⁵⁹ i.e., when both partners are practicing qualities such as empathy, esteem

¹⁵⁷ Sherod Miller, Ramon Corrales, and Daniel B. Wackman, "Recent Progress in Understanding and Facilitating Marital Communication," *The Family Coordinator*, 24 no. 2 (April 1975), 143-152.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 148.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 149.

building, and the validating of emotions, there will be vitality in the relationship. It is hoped that the reader has noticed that each of these research studies draws the same conclusions, with considerably more expense, which the Bible does. This should give the church hope that she does not need to be marginalized in the quest to enhance marriage.

Cross-Cultural Communication

The fields of marriage and gender communication are not the only ones to yield fruitful harvest for those who want to improve their speaking and listening. Though it is hoped the reader is now convinced men are not from Mars nor women from Venus, there still exist differences between the sexes which can be difficult to understand and appreciate. This is where a “dip” into cross-cultural communication can be refreshing. If one can view interaction with one’s spouse as an intriguing cross-cultural experience rather than a battle with an enemy alien, communication is bound to improve.

David C. Thomas’ and Kerr Inkson’s *Cultural Intelligence; People Skills for Global Business*¹⁶⁰ is written to help business people have success in foreign cultures. However, if husbands and wives read their book with an eye to improving their marriages, they will receive valuable insights. Cultural intelligence, defined as:

being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning more about it from your ongoing interactions with it, and gradually reshaping your thinking to be more sympathetic to the culture and your behavior to be more skilled and appropriate when interacting with others from the culture....¹⁶¹

is as useful in the bedroom as it is in the boardroom. According to Thomas and Inkson, cultural intelligence has three components: knowledge, mindfulness and behavioral skills. Knowledge involves understanding one’s own culture and the ways in which it affects

¹⁶⁰ David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson. *Cultural Intelligence; People Skills for Global Business*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2003).

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 14, 15.

one's interpretation of the behavior of those outside that culture. Mindfulness¹⁶² is defined as "the ability to pay attention in a reflective and creative way to cues in the cross-cultural situations encountered" while behavioral skills encompass "choosing the appropriate behavior from a well-developed repertoire... which will be correct for different intercultural situations."¹⁶³ If the words "husband" or "wife" were to be substituted for "cross-cultural experience," would not following these principles help develop the attitude necessary for positive marital communication? Thinking of a spouse as a "sometimes puzzling member of another culture" rather than "one of those annoying opposite-sex people" avoids some of the gender accusations and stereotyping which can often hinder good communication.

If the world of global business seems too distant from marriage, the reader may feel more comfortable finding cross-cultural insights applicable to marital communication in *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* by David J. Hesselgrave.¹⁶⁴ This long-term missionary and missions professor writes that developing knowledge and experience are necessary to understand another culture; furthermore, language is key in both these endeavors. Quoting George Orwell's pronouncement that "sloppy language leads to sloppy thought,"¹⁶⁵ Hesselgrave stresses the importance of understanding, not just the "acoustic signals,"¹⁶⁶ but the meaning and context of a culture's words. This can be accomplished by studying body language (i.e. gestures, touching behavior, appropriate space between speakers) and paralanguage (how something is said). Hesselgrave

¹⁶² Interestingly, mindfulness is defined in similar fashion in Christian mystical literature dating as early as the 16th century, with God being substituted for cross-cultural situations as the object of mindfulness.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 15, 38.

¹⁶⁴ David J. Hesselgrave. *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally; An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 344, 345.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 355.

contends that in cross-cultural mission efforts the “how” of communication often muddies the clear “what” of the gospel message. Certainly the same could be said of some husband/wife interactions. Care is not taken to deliver a message that can be received by the “cross-cultural respondent”¹⁶⁷ living under one’s own roof. If spouses are feeling like giving up on trying to understand their mates, a perusal of *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* might prove to be the inspiration needed. Where a marriage book giving communication tips could induce guilt and defensiveness, *Communicating...* presents similar principles in a setting some may be more able to appreciate.

Listening

It seems appropriate to end this chapter with a section on books about listening, perhaps the most difficult of all the communication skills to master. This may be because listening is much more than a skill. It involves sacrificial love as one sets aside one’s own needs and agenda for a period of time, to devote one’s full attention to another, something not at all easy for naturally selfish human beings to do.

Joyce Huggett recognizes this dilemma and addresses it compassionately in *Listening to Others*.¹⁶⁸ She learned from painful personal experience the “inexpressible comfort of just being listened to,”¹⁶⁹ and from this need being met, God birthed a desire to be a listener in ministry to others. She learned much that David Hesselgrave would affirm based on his cross-cultural experience: good listeners watch as well as hear, they empathize more than sympathize, they seek to clarify because it is not always clear what people mean when they use certain words. They are also not afraid of silences, for it may

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Chapter 12.

¹⁶⁸ Joyce Huggett. *Listening to Others; How One Woman Discovered a Healing Art*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 90.

be after a silence that seems painfully long, that a valuable insight is shared. Huggett learned to become a creative questioner instead of a premature problem solver, and perhaps most vital of all, she learned to listen to God for his ever-appropriate words for herself and others. Recognizing that everyone comes to relationships with baggage, she devotes a good portion of her book to giving readers helpful tools that they can use to dig up and deal with any hurts that may be unconsciously affecting their ability truly to listen.

If Joyce Huggett reflects poetically on listening, Sherod and Phyllis Miller, Elam Nunnally and Daniel Wackman are listening's practical spokespeople. Miller and his colleagues use their years of research experience to provide a short course in couple communication, *Talking and Listening Together*.¹⁷⁰ This course is designed to be offered in church as well as in therapeutic settings, though it is not specifically Christian. As of 1991, more than 200,000 couples have participated in the program, including this writer and her husband.¹⁷¹ The authors present what they call The Awareness Wheel as a means of better understanding oneself and one's partner. The Awareness Wheel has five sections: *Sensory Data*—verbal and nonverbal input, and intuitive sensations; *Thoughts*—the meanings a person makes to help him/her understand life, meanings that come from beliefs, interpretations and expectations; *Feelings*—a person's emotional responses; *Wants*—a person's desires for self and others; and *Actions*—past, present and future behavior.¹⁷² Along with a workbook, Awareness Wheel mats are provided, where a person moves from place to place on the wheel as he/she speaks. This physical movement encourages clarity of expression. For instance one might say, "I feel you

¹⁷⁰ Sherod Miller, Phyllis Miller, Elam W. Nunnally, & Daniel B. Wackman. *Talking and Listening Together; Couple Communication I*, (Littleton: Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc., 1991).

¹⁷¹ The writer's church, Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts, has presented the course as an adult Sunday School offering twice in the last several years.

¹⁷² Miller, 15-25.

don't understand me" and believe he or she is communicating a feeling. However, that statement is actually a thought. When one spouse is in the Awareness Wheel, the other is not supposed to speak except for an occasional clarification and a final summing up of what has been said.

Though the technique of moving around on a mat may be somewhat forced and artificial, it does promote good listening. It discourages interruptions, it lessens accusation, and it provides a place to identify controversial issues and deal with them as a team instead of as adversaries. The authors discuss two types of listening, reactive and explorative. Reactive listeners seek to control more than connect. They listen only long enough to formulate a response to the speaker and then "they counter with their own perspective."¹⁷³ Reactive listening is efficient, but it also breeds tension and defensiveness. Explorative listening has a tentative quality to it. It examines possibilities, tries to catch the vision of the speaker, and asks open-ended questions. The explorative listener is truly interested in what his/her spouse has to say. "In this search mode, you want to gain perspective, expand knowledge, clarify misunderstandings, and clear up confusion."¹⁷⁴ In a world that presses couples to "hurry up," even in areas as sensitive as the sharing of the heart, any method, however contrived, that encourages taking time to truly hear the words, may be worth giving a try.

What Norman Wright's book does for communication, David Augsburger's *Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard*¹⁷⁵ does for listening. Both men offer practical, biblically rich guides, with Augsburger's being the more serious of the two. He contends

¹⁷³ Ibid. 124.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 128.

¹⁷⁵ David Augsburger. *Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard*, (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1982) Both H. Norman Wright and David Augsburger are renowned Christian counselors, professors and writers.

that “being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.”¹⁷⁶ Though it does not deal specifically with marriage, *Caring* has much to say to husbands and wives. Good communication is “co-perception,”¹⁷⁷ two people who make the attempt to see something with the same sets of meanings. This may not be completely possible, since “some words have one hundred or more different meanings,”¹⁷⁸ but the goal is still worth pursuing. Time must be made for true listening to take place. When husbands and wives are filled with their own exhaustion, excitement or stress, it is unlikely that effective listening will happen. An effort of the will is needed to take the six steps Augsburgers says must be walked in order to listen: “presence, attention, authentic interest, suspension of judgment, patience, and commitment to work toward a mutual, reciprocal dialogue.”¹⁷⁹ Augsburgers has a high view of dialogue, believing that without empathetic listening it cannot take place, but degenerates into reciprocal monologues. The writer can hear Paul Tournier’s phrase, “dialogues of the deaf” echoing in her ears.

Perhaps a quotation from Dietrich Bonhoeffer that David Augsburgers cites, is a fitting way to end both this section and this chapter, which has highlighted books and articles designed to help couples make their marriages and their communication all that the Maker of marriage and communication wants them to be:

He who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either, he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too. Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 12.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 28.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 29.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 38, 39.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 147. The Bonhoeffer quotation is from *Life Together*.

Chapter 4

Project Design

Introduction

If there is a communication problem between husbands and wives (chapter 1), if there is a theological foundation for a solution that addresses the deficiencies in both intent and skill (chapter 2), and if there is helpful sacred and secular literature available (chapter 3), then what should churches be doing?

The temptation is twofold. First, any church might be tempted to do nothing—throw up her metaphorical hands in despair and leave it to the professionals—“We’re a church, not a counseling center. We do theology, not psychology or sociology.” The second temptation is to throw pious platitudes at the problem, hoping it will slink quietly away—“Just talk nicely to each other and you’ll be fine,” “If you just understood submission, you wouldn’t have this problem.” It should be obvious that neither approach will be very effective.

The church can learn from the discovery recorded by many of the researchers cited in chapter one; namely, communication is improved by attitude enhancement and skill development. However, the effects of any communication enrichment strategy will weaken over time, therefore “booster shots” are recommended. Even in this postmodern, post Christian, western world, there are more people who attend church than see marital therapists. This fact places the church in a strategic position to provide help. She can be the doctor administering those communication-enhancing booster shots in the venues of sermon, small group, Sunday school class, and retreat. The patient is present; poorly communicating husbands and wives are sitting in the pew and attending church events.

Can messages about the healthy use of heart, ear, and tongue be one of the medicines they receive?

Retreat

This writer chose a weekend married couples' retreat as the "booster shot" she would develop and administer.¹⁸¹ A retreat can be a time to "advance" as people come away from their daily routines and into a place where they can more easily reflect and focus. A retreat setting can provide an ideal opportunity for a subject such as communication to be explored. Usually "far from the madding crowd," there is much beauty for the eye and rest for the ear as pollution and noise recede into the distance with each mile added to the odometer.¹⁸² Children, often a distraction to good marital communication, are left behind,¹⁸³ as are extended family, unfinished house projects, to-do lists, television, and computers. No thought has to be given to meal preparation. There is fellowship with other couples traveling the same pilgrim path. During small group times, issues can be addressed in a non-threatening way. People find that they are neither alone in, nor judged for, their problems. In the set-apart time of a retreat, wounds inflicted from poor communication can begin to heal, and healthy communication habits can be exercised.

The writer designed a retreat that was "speakerless" for two reasons. First, many churches cannot afford to hire an outside speaker, and the pastoral staff may already be overburdened. A speakerless retreat can be shared and used by churches of all sizes and

¹⁸¹ The entire retreat can be found in Appendix B. Heartfelt thanks and acknowledgement are offered to Park Street Church's Family Minister, Kris Perkins, for attractively formatting the material.

¹⁸² This retreat was held at the Eagle Mountain House in Jackson, New Hampshire. The time was April 29-May 1, 2005, a time chosen because of its intersection with fairly good weather and the Inn's off-season, and therefore, reduced rates.

¹⁸³ The church did provide on-site childcare for children two years of age and under.

financial conditions. Second, it is the writer's experience that evangelical Christians know far more about faith and life than they put into practice. Being given a goodly amount of time to "do" communication might therefore be more effective than hearing about it.

This retreat was entitled *Talking Together*, as the writer wanted an unassuming name that would not make participants feel they were going to have to "perform" during the weekend. It was hoped that the subtitle, *Men may be from Mars and Women from Venus, but God put us here on Earth together, so we should learn how to talk with each other*, would elicit a chuckle. Men, especially, can feel defensive about their communication skills, and if humor can be gently put into practice as a tool to disarm them, let it be used.

Thirty-six couples attended the weekend. All were from the writer's church, Park Street Church in Boston. The age spread was from twenty-three to seventy-two, with the majority being in the late twenties to early forties range (25 couples). Most couples were Caucasian-American but there were international (1), mixed international/American (2), Asian (1), mixed Asian/Caucasian (2), mixed African-American/Caucasian (1) represented. The retreat was advertised in the church's general newsletter and in the Families Together Newsletter¹⁸⁴. A prime avenue of recruitment came at the Valentine's Day Dinner that the church gives annually. At the dinner, there were testimonials from past marriage-retreat participants. Anyone signing up at this time received twenty-five dollars off the registration fee. Approximately fifteen couples did sign up, unusual for a church where most wait until the last minute to register for events.

¹⁸⁴ This is a monthly informational newsletter that was mailed to families at the time of the retreat. It is now sent out electronically.

Drive up

The retreat began on the three and a half hour drive to New Hampshire with “Car Talk,” a sheet of optional activities to be done during the ride. The writer wanted to speak to the mood of passengers who might be less than happy as they edged their way out of Friday-night rush hour traffic, so she began “Car Talk” with:

It's the weekend! And though you're probably weary and part of you would rather zone out silently in front of the tube tonight, you're here, in the car, headed north beside your beloved spouse to participate in a retreat about communication! Maybe you're wondering what you've gotten yourselves into and are feeling nervous. Maybe you've left behind agitated children, and are feeling torn. Maybe you've had (or are still having!) a fuss with the aforementioned beloved spouse, a fuss precipitated by dashing about in harried preparation for a marriage weekend! A fuss which may have highlighted your poor communication skills!

Don't worry! Ask the Lord, the fully compassionate One, to bless you with peace. Take a few deep breaths and enjoy the journey. It's going to be a relaxing time together. You're going to be reminded anew why you chose to spend the rest of your life in dialogue with this person you married. Here are some thoughts to help turn your minds and hearts toward the subject of conversation in marriage. Have fun chatting!

There followed a general question, “What sort of things do you like to talk about?” and then a series of biblical Proverbs, serious quotes, and funny cartoons about communication.

Friday night

Anticipating tiredness and “frazzlement,” the writer designed the Friday night activity to be brief and low key: refreshments and registration, large-group singing and announcements, and small groups whose focus was ice breaking (with questions provided), and a brief introduction to the communication material the writer had compiled. This consisted of Biblical quotations, quotes from Christian and secular sources, and cartoons from *The New Yorker* magazine that the writer had been collecting over the past few years. It was deemed useful to provide various types of material

because people use it to meet different needs, and are reassured by different sorts of information. Bible passages show that the Scriptures do have something to say about husbands and wives in dialogue. They demonstrate that good speech is valued and hurtful speech is condemned. Anyone who thought that an emphasis on improving communication was frivolous or worldly would have to think again when confronted with the dozens of proverbs on the subject. Modern-day writings about speaking and listening validate that communication continues to be an important area for study. They also present practical ways for husbands and wives to improve. Cartoons can bring a laugh as well as an “aha” moment when one sees oneself in a burst of clarity brought on by defense-reducing humor.

Saturday Morning

Saturday morning began with a directed couple quiet time after breakfast. With lives often on overdrive, it is rare for husbands and wives to downshift, taking the time to study the Bible together. A marriage retreat can provide this opportunity, but often does not, as all the “spiritual” activity is designated for small-group time. The writer wanted to counteract this trend by providing some set-apart study and reflection time when each couple could be alone together. First they were asked to take the time to invite the Holy Spirit to be present and active as they talked. This was done as a reminder that when a Christian couple is together there is always “An Other” present (Matthew 18:20), and he is one who can be asked to help with communication problems because he is the master Counselor (John 14:16, 17). The couple quiet time was based on the collected communication proverbs, and attempted to engage different learning styles.

This private time was followed by the second small-group time, focusing primarily on how Jesus listened and used words. Because the retreat was without a

formal speaker, each “together time,” whether with one couple or several, included at least one short reflection. The reflection from the second small-group time emphasized that it is not just the Proverbs that tell about good communication. The reflection is included in this chapter as an example of the instruction that can take place even when no official Bible teacher is present:

We have spent some time reflecting as couples on what the Proverbs say about the talking we do with each other. Now let's see what the Master Communicator Himself does with words. Jesus, perfectly God and perfectly man, knew how to use His tongue well. Not only that, He knew how to listen. (For instance, it is never recorded that He interrupted!) He can teach long lessons and have no one fall asleep, but He can also ask one pithy question that clarifies everything. In fact, Jesus probably asks more questions than any other person in the Bible, certainly in the New Testament, even though He is God and understands people's hearts before they speak! His first recorded words are questions (Luke 2:49) and they season His speech throughout the Gospels. Jesus does not seem to be afraid of stepping on toes either. He praises, but never flatters. He does not avoid conflict; in fact sometimes it seems He purposely makes a comment that will rile His listeners, or at least disturb their complacency. He is willing to rebuke both beloved disciple and antagonistic Pharisee. What can we learn about communication from this One who is wise with words? Before we study the following passages, let's pray together.

Couples then analyzed three different types of situations—Jesus with strangers, with friends, and with enemies—on the theory that sometimes a spouse can feel like any one of the three. Twelve questions were provided to encourage analysis and keep the discussions on track. This was followed by a brainstorming session on hindrances to good communication, a short modern-day parable (because stories open hearts)¹⁸⁵, and a prayer time.

The morning small group session was followed by lunch, and another small group session that was much more playful in nature. The time was spent exploring what the

¹⁸⁵ See 2 Samuel 12:1-14 for an example of this principle.

world says about husband/wife dialogue. Group members were invited to complete sentences such as:

The world says apologizing will threaten your status/admiration level with your spouse, but...

The world says in an argument, it's better to be preparing your next salvo than to be listening to your spouse, but...

The world says you're too...(tired, stupid, selfish, boring, etc.) to understand, listen and talk effectively with your spouse, but...

This activity loosened up participants and led into a discussion about cross-cultural communication. The writer has discovered that the great strides made in this area can benefit marital communication, though to her knowledge the two fields have not yet been formally linked. She wrote in the retreat material:

As the far-flung reaches of the globe become more of a global village, it becomes increasingly necessary that people learn to adapt to cultural differences. This avoids mistakes in missions, politics, and business that could have disastrous consequences. The principles that are being developed to enable people of widely differing cultures to comprehend one another can also be very useful for husbands and wives. For instance, they can help remove accusation—think how often one is tempted to say, “If you weren’t so male/female, you’d get what I mean!” But if one substitutes, “If you weren’t so Chinese/Swedish/Kenyan...,” the jibe sounds rather ridiculous. People do not expect someone from another culture to immediately understand them—note all the jokes there are about foolish tourists thinking they can get their message across if they just speak more loudly and slowly. It is hoped that the errors of colonialism have demonstrated that it is unwise to impose foreign cultural mores. If one would not think of forcing a Hindu from India to eat a Big Mac, why would one insist on forcing one’s spouse to use one’s own communication pattern?

The area of cross-cultural communication provides a non-threatening venue for husbands and wives to explore this concept. Men may often believe that they do badly at talking to their wives so they can be gloomy about the prospects of success and defensive when their spouses suggest any improvement. They may have more confidence that they can cut a business deal with a foreign customer than they do about communicating their

viewpoint to the woman living under their own roof. The writer hoped to convince retreat participants that some of the same techniques apply.

Saturday Afternoon

Cross-cultural communication was the focus of the third small-group time, and conversation was lively, even though the meeting was after lunch. People engaged a definition of cultural intelligence and applied three of its components to married life.¹⁸⁶ They reflected on whether Jesus demonstrated cultural intelligence in the conversations they had analyzed earlier. They discussed several quotes about the cross-cultural business environment. The writer's purpose in all this was to bring down some defenses and spark an excitement for marital dialogue. The session ended with group prayer.

The bunching of these two small-group sessions may not have been ideal, but it provided a large afternoon block for free time, culminating in dinner out.¹⁸⁷ Couples could eat by themselves or with other couples. This large amount of unstructured time was purposeful. When people are learning about good communication, it is necessary to give them time to do it, to begin developing helpful habits while motivation is still strong. After dinner, refreshments, and optional group games such as *Taboo* and *Cranium* were offered at the inn. Many couples took advantage of the opportunity to "lighten up" and laugh together.

Sunday Morning

Sunday morning's couple quiet time began with the following:

¹⁸⁶ Knowledge, mindfulness and behavioral skills. The material for this cross-cultural reflection came mainly from the book *People Skills for Global Business* by David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson. It is reviewed in chapter 3 and referenced in the Bibliography.

¹⁸⁷ Price and atmosphere information on local restaurants was provided. The price of this meal was not included in the retreat cost.

Do your minds feel full of information and things you need to change? Are you feeling overwhelmed or refreshed? Or perhaps both! Hopefully you've had a chance during free time to talk together about some of the things you've been learning. If you want to, take some moments to review and reflect together.

No matter how you're feeling about your ability or lack thereof in the communication area, Jesus is with you. Read these words from the Chris Rice song, "Untitled Hymn", take a few deep breaths, give your spouse a hug and read Luke 7:11-15.

The Luke passage was included as a gentle yet insistent reminder that talking is a sign of life. There are many times in Scripture when Jesus heals the mute, causing them to burst forth into speech.¹⁸⁸ This demonstrates that he values the ability to talk; good speech delights him. No matter how introverted a spouse may be, speech is necessary. Of course it is better to keep silent than to use unwholesome words, but best of all is to speak in ways that are life and light-giving.

After reading the Luke passage, the couples engaged in a study of Ephesians 4:20-5:2. At the end they were encouraged to come up with ten helps to good communication. They were also asked to make a measurable goal for the future by harking back to Ephesians 4:32:

can you think of one way you can be kind, compassionate or forgiving to your spouse with your words in the next month? If you want to, you can write what you decide to do down without telling your spouse. Date it today, then in a month ask each other if you noticed anything different in the communication area!

In conclusion, each husband and wife was asked to read Ephesians 5:1,2 out loud to each other and sing "What a Friend We have in Jesus."

The retreat ended with lunch preceded by a worship service designed to glorify God and celebrate marriage, especially marital communication. There was much

¹⁸⁸ Matthew 9:32-34; 12:22-24; 15:29-31; Mark 7:31-37.

singing¹⁸⁹, a time for adoration, confession (done silently and with spouse), thanksgiving for things that had happened on the weekend (done in small groups) and communion (with couples giving each other the elements). The leader's words were written out so that anyone could carry out this function.

The leader closed with a benediction that, it is hoped, is an apt way to close this presentation of the retreat as well:

May the Son of God, who is already formed in you, grow in you, so that for you He will become immeasurable; and that in you He will become laughter, exultation, the fullness of joy which no one can take from you.
Isaac of Stella 1169

Let your conversation always be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:6)

Go in peace and blessed speech!

Evaluation—The Best Laid Plans

Conducting research in a busy church can be problematic; conducting it in the last moments of a church-sponsored weekend away may be an example of poet Robert Burns' verse, "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley."¹⁹⁰ The writer's plan was to distribute brief surveys for participants to fill out after the Sunday morning communion service. However, since a target audience was gathered in one place, Park Street's family minister naturally wanted to take the opportunity to garner information that could be used to implement better family and marriage programs in the future. Therefore, he expanded the survey from one-half a page to two sides of a page, condensing some of the writer's original questions so that two appeared on the same line.

¹⁸⁹ All songs used were included at the back of the retreat booklet, along with a bibliography of works cited.

¹⁹⁰ From the poem, "To a Mouse." 1785. Accessed 4/16/07 at robertburns.org. No update information given at the site.

Here is a truism for future researchers: If two questions appear on the same line, the person surveyed will almost always answer only the second one.¹⁹¹ Thus the writer's "What was your overall impression of the curriculum?" was swallowed up by "How could it have been improved?" People tended not to answer either question if they were happy with the curriculum.

Another "snafu" was the survey's distribution. Anticipating that most people do not like to fill out evaluative surveys at the end of an event, the writer announced that they would be used in the thesis she was writing. She hoped this plea would inspire increased participation. However, amidst the bustle of collecting kids for the last meal, saying good-byes, and putting the room back in order, many surveys were not completed, and some were lost. In fact, the writer thought all were lost until Park Street Church's family minister discovered twelve in his files.¹⁹² With twenty-twenty hindsight, the writer would have distributed the surveys herself, instead of having people drop them in a box as they were leaving. She would have done this before the communion service, even though it meant that communion, which proved to be a meaningful experience of worship and renewed commitment, would not have been included in participants' evaluations.

More Twenty-Twenty Hindsight

The writer would have made her survey much more specific, attempting to glean information by having people check off possibilities and rank preferences rather than having them write their thoughts. The latter approach requires more effort on the part of

¹⁹¹ This is written rather tongue-in-cheek since the number of surveys received (12) is not statistically significant enough to merit a conclusion.

¹⁹² The writer would like to thank Pastor Kris Perkins for being willing to search his files a year and a half after the retreat, in the midst of his busy schedule, and for providing the writer with a complete list of those who participated. The latter was enormously helpful for conducting the interviews reported in the next section.

the respondent; therefore it invites one-word, generalized answers. The retreat was “great,” “wonderful,” the curriculum was “interesting,” “thought provoking,” compliments to be sure, but not very helpful in discovering what elements should be repeated. The writer should have included a question that listed all the parts of the retreat and asked people to rank the three they liked best, instead of the too open-ended question she did ask, “What was your overall impression of this retreat?” She also should have included a question that broke down the curriculum into segments and asked people to rank which three segments were new information. Another question would ask which three segments contained old information that was fruitful in the repeating. A third curriculum question would use the same segments and ask which three spoke to an area of communication that the person wanted to improve.

Because the results from the Spring 2005 marriage retreat were sparse, the writer conducted ten interviews with people who had attended the retreat. These interviews took place by phone in January of 2007, twenty months after the retreat had occurred. The writer chose to interview people who had been on at least two marriage retreats with Park Street Church. She did this on the assumption that “repeaters” had enjoyed their first experience enough to want to do it again, and she wanted to discover what they had particularly liked. An interview is a more free-flowing process than filling out a survey, but the writer attempted to keep some continuity by asking each interviewee the same four questions:¹⁹³

Though there were difficulties in the original survey process, the writer believes the information in Chapter 5 will demonstrate that enough information was gleaned to

¹⁹³ The questions are included in Chapter 5 along with a sampling of responses.

consider a marriage retreat to be a positive venue for communication enhancement to take place.

Chapter 5

Outcomes and Future Directions

A problem has loomed large on the relational landscape—the difficulty husbands and wives can have communicating with each other. A theological solution that can encompass the problem has been presented. Literature that can improve it has been discussed. A retreat designed to ameliorate it has been implemented. What has been discovered? How do these discoveries affect the future ministry of the church?

Outcomes and Improvements

In the twelve recovered surveys from the marriage retreat, the writer noticed that people were more likely to give details about something they thought should be improved. If they liked things the way they were, they were content to write something like this response, “We had a wonderful time. We feel refreshed and rejuvenated.” Therefore, when composing future surveys, stating the parts of the retreat and inviting respondents to check, or place a 1,2,3 beside the ones they liked, should garner more detailed information about what people prefer and want repeated.

With twenty-twenty hindsight, the writer would have added three post-retreat surveys, sent out via email. The first would have been sent one week after the retreat and would have consisted of only three questions for both husbands and wives to answer separately. They would have been:

1. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is “excellent,” 4 is “average,” and 7 is “needs work,” how would you rate communication with your spouse during the week before the retreat?
2. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is “excellent,” 4 is “average,” and 7 is “needs work,” how would you rate communication with your spouse during the week after the retreat?

3. Please state briefly anything from the retreat that you feel may have influenced communication with your spouse in the week after the retreat.

The second and third surveys would have been sent out three and nine months after the retreat. They would have consisted of only one question:

1. Please state briefly if there is anything from Park Street's spring retreat on Couple Communication that you feel may have influenced communication with your spouse during the last week.

The writer's clumsiness as a researcher need not mean that nothing can be learned from this retreat experience. Though only twelve surveys were recovered, and seventy-six adults attended, the surveys were unanimous in expressing the participants' delight in having a weekend away with their spouses. The responders were also almost unanimous (75percent) in saying that though they really appreciated the curriculum, it was "a bit much" for one weekend. They wrote comments such as:

"much more to think about than there was time for during this weekend" and

"It felt like a lot to cover for the amount of time allotted...The amount of Proverbs provided was overwhelming."

These demonstrated to the writer that "less really is more" where the curriculum for a marriage retreat is concerned. Other useful, reiterated statements were:

"We enjoyed the cartoons!"

"Loved the quotes and toons...some really hit home. Also enjoyed the discussion of cultural differences."

"Good to look at Scripture regarding communication."

What the writer learned about composing and distributing surveys, as well as the danger of "information overload," will all be taken to heart as she develops the

next Park Street Church Marriage Retreat, scheduled for April 13-15, 2007.¹⁹⁴

A Set of Interviews

As indicated at the end of Chapter 4, the writer carried out a series of ten interviews with retreat participants in an attempt to ameliorate the loss of the original surveys. The interviews were conducted by phone and always included the following four questions:¹⁹⁵

1. You have attended at least two of Park Street's Couples' Retreats. What are the things you like about marriage retreats?
2. What, if anything, do you remember about the Couples' Retreat held the year before last? The topic was *Talking Together; Husbands and Wives in Communication*.
3. Which event in the following pairs would you rank first in terms of your personal preference?

Small-group time
Couple quiet time

Small-group time
Saturday night games

Couple quiet time
Saturday afternoon free time

Saturday night games
Saturday night dinner out

Saturday afternoon free time
Gathered meal times

Saturday night dinner out
Couple quiet time

Gathered meal times
Sunday morning communion service

Couple quiet time
Sunday morning communion service

4. Which event in the following pairs would you prefer as a venue for the topic of husband/wife communication?

Weekend Retreat
Adult Christian Formation Class

¹⁹⁴ The writer would like to thank Anne May, her daughter-in-law, for her help in survey design. Anne graduated with a statistics major from Harvard University and is now employed as a statistician for the city of Burlington, Vermont. Her help both in designing the survey for the Honeymooners Class and in formulating questions for the twenty month interview (described in the next section) was invaluable.

¹⁹⁵ The writer has included the survey questions here rather than in Chapter 4 so that the reader can more easily relate questions to answers.

Adult Christian Formation Class
Church sponsored evening event for couples

Pastor-led Christian Formation Class
Lay-led Christian Formation Class

Weekend retreat
Saturday seminar

Saturday seminar
Downtown Boston breakfast series

Since ten interviews do not constitute much statistical significance, the writer thought it best to report the results in terms of testimonials that exemplify the majority opinion if there was one, and various opinions if there was no clear majority.

For question 1, which asked what they liked about marriage retreats:

“A retreat creates uninterrupted space for us to be intentional about our marriage. It also helps us engage in other couples’ lives deeper than just lobby conversation.”

“I love the schedule, lots of time for catching up as a couple, to reload on a lot of dimensions.”

“It’s nice that we always know way ahead when it’s going to be so we can get it onto our schedules.”

“Getting away from home! At first it’s a hassle getting ready, but once you get there, it’s all playtime!”

“It’s a facilitated time to focus on spiritual things and grow.”

“It’s a set apart time. Work can’t call. There’s nothing to disturb you.”

For question 2, which asked what they remembered about the communication retreat:

“I don’t remember anything distinctly.”

“It’s hard to separate now what I learned about communication from the retreat and what from other sources like books and classes.”

“Great small group discussions. We had a very fun small group. We struggled with similar things.”

For question 3, which asked which parts of the retreat were their favorites:

There were many comments of, “I like them all.” “Please don’t change the schedule; we like everything.” “It’s too hard to pick.” That being said, some of the most popular events were small groups, couple quiet time, Saturday dinner out, gathered meal times, and the communion service. One participant said, “Gee, a communion service is a gathered meal time, isn’t it?” something the writer had not considered when she composed the question.

For question 4, which asked which venue they favored for further teaching/experiencing couple communication:

A weekend retreat won out over an Adult Christian Formation Class in all cases except one. In every case a weekend retreat was preferred to a Saturday seminar. People preferred a church-sponsored evening couples’ event to an Adult Christian Formation Class in all cases but one. Six out of ten preferred a lay-led communication class to a pastor-led one. One respondent said he still remembered the class when Couple Communication was taught even though it was several years ago. These responses seemed to indicate a preference for doing communication rather than learning about it. The writer found this interesting since it might be expected that the members of a “cerebral” church such as Park Street would prefer a class to an encounter. However, in almost every case the more social event was chosen. This would seem to be good news for small church staffs, because a social event usually involves less pastor effort than a Sunday School class does.

Another Survey

The writer conducted another survey, sent out via email at the end of the Fall 2006 Honeymooners Class, offered bi-annually at Park Street Church from September to December as a lay-led morning Sunday School class for people married approximately one year or less. It was hoped this questionnaire would fill a few more gaps left from the writer's difficulties in the first surveying process, and also glean information on how best to continue to improve husband/wife communication in the church setting. About twenty newly married couples attended the class and six couples facilitated,¹⁹⁶ taking turns leading the different sessions. At any given session there were approximately fourteen newlyweds and three or four facilitating couples present. Fifteen honeymooners ranging in age from twenty-three to forty returned questionnaires.¹⁹⁷ Ten were female, five male, confirming data suggesting that women are more likely to fill out surveys than men. Five leaders ranging in age from thirty to fifty-six returned questionnaires. Three were female, two male. The writer thought the best way to present the results of the survey would be to include data and analysis of any interesting findings in this section, and include a copy of the survey, a spreadsheet, and graphs of all the data collected in Appendix C.¹⁹⁸

The survey began with the following question:

1. *Approximately how many times did you attend any Sunday church service last month?* _____

¹⁹⁶ The writer and her husband were one of the facilitating couples.

¹⁹⁷ One female did not list her age.

¹⁹⁸ Many thanks are hereby formalized to the writer's husband, Douglas, for his work creating a spreadsheet and graphs, skills the writer does not yet possess.

It was encouraging to note that one hundred percent of all respondents had attended church at least three times in the last month, and 85 percent had attended four times or more.¹⁹⁹ Though the sample is small, the extremely high percentage gives hope that Sunday morning church can still be a place to reach married Christians. It also may indicate that if a topic is of pressing interest, as a honeymooners' class would be for newlyweds, it may draw people to attend church. An idea for further research might be to probe which desire comes first on Sunday morning, that of worship or instruction. Do people come to church and then pick a class they like, or do they hear about a class and then come to church until it is completed?

Question 2 asked:

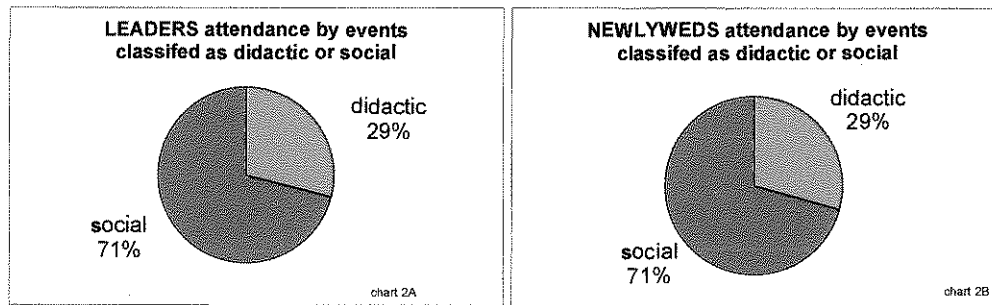
2. *Over the past year how many of the following events did you attend? (If you attended more than one retreat, for instance, indicate how many in the blank.)*

Retreat _____
Conference _____
Seminar _____
Adult Sunday School Class _____
Church Sponsored Social Event _____
Small Group
 Weekly _____
 Bi-weekly _____
 Monthly _____

The writer found it noteworthy that honeymooners and facilitators both attended significantly more social events than structured learning experiences. This was also the case for the interviewed, retreat-attending couples, none of whom were newlyweds. The following two graphs illustrate the honeymooners' and facilitators' event-attending pattern over the past year.²⁰⁰ (chart 2A and 2B)

¹⁹⁹ The month surveyed was December, and therefore included a Christmas Eve service.

²⁰⁰ The writer has chosen to consider a conference as a more didactic, structured event, though she realizes this may not always be the case.



Fifteen out of twenty people attended at least one church-sponsored social event (75 percent), with 53 percent of these participating in three or more such events. This is promising because these activities are times when communication can be fostered, even though it is not being studied directly. For instance, Park Street Church hosts an annual Valentine's Day Dinner. Free babysitting is provided and an elegant meal is served in a transformed fellowship hall, all for a very reasonable price. The "medium" becomes the "message" as couples get a chance to talk to each other in a relaxed setting.

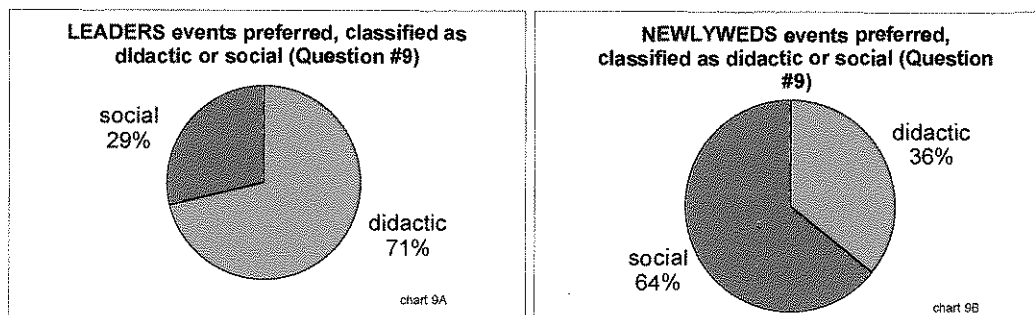
The writer noted that while 80 percent of the leaders had attended retreats in the past year, only 27 percent of the honeymooners had done so. She speculates that this rather low percentage for honeymooners is because most were not married at the time of the last marriage retreat. It also may be because the couples were occupied planning their weddings and did not want to take a weekend away during such a busy season of life. It will be interesting to see how many honeymooners from the class will attend Park Street Church's upcoming Couples Retreat.

Probably the most noteworthy finding became evident when the answers to question 2 were compared to those of question 9:

9. *Which of the following church-sponsored activities would you be most likely to attend? Choose 3 and rank in order of preference with 1 being "most likely."*

Couples' Retreat _____
Single Sex Retreat _____
Adult Sunday School Class on Marriage _____
Adult Sunday School Class on Communication _____
Relationship Focused Small Group/Bible Study _____
Downtown Breakfast Series on Communication _____
Downtown Luncheon Series on Communication _____
All Church Social Event _____
Age Related Church Social Event _____

The graphs 9A and 9B illustrate the way newlyweds and facilitators answered.



It can be seen that while the honeymooners' future preferences and past performances were remarkably consistent, this was not the case for the facilitators, who almost exactly reversed what they saw themselves doing in the future from what they had done in the past year. Why might this be so? Do older couples feel they "should" be more interested in didactic events, though in reality they attend social ones? Did this particular sample feel they had engaged in "plenty of fun" over the past year and it was now time to increase their knowledge base? Did their preferences reflect a desire for more of the kind of service that they had given in this class? The data do not answer these questions, but it might be an interesting "rabbit trail" to pursue.

While pairing questions 2 and 9 highlighted a thought-provoking reversal, the writer realized that she should have phrased question 3 differently, since everyone attending the

Honeymooners' Class had therefore attended at least one relationship-focused event. A better question would have been:

Other than this class, were any of these events specifically related to marriage/ communication/ relationships? If so, explain briefly.

The only noteworthy data here was that while thirty percent of the female honeymooners stated that they had also attended an engaged-couples class, and one would presume they did so with their fiancés, none of the males who returned surveys recorded this fact.

Question 4 asked:

4. *In the past 2 years approximately how many books did you read about marriage?* _____

Almost everyone who returned surveys²⁰¹ had read a least one, and sixty-five percent had read more than one. This is an encouraging fact in a world where books are being bumped by television, video games, and the internet.

In a review of book topics (question 5), respondents were asked:

5. *As you recall which of the following topics were covered? Check all that apply*

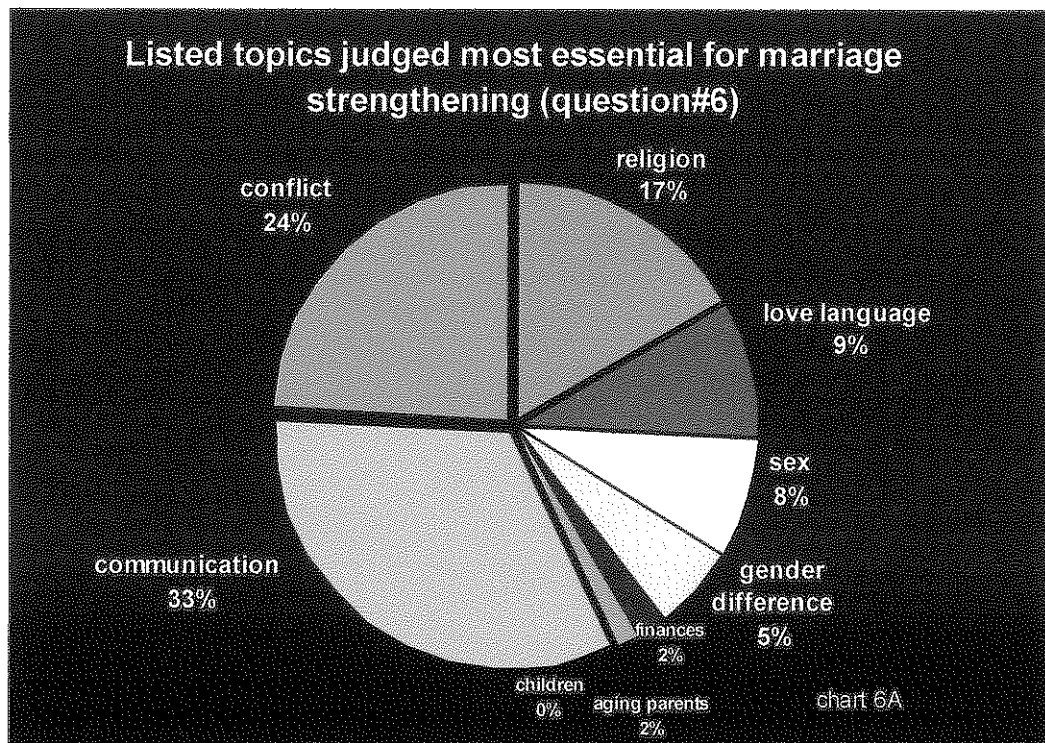
Finances _____ *Sex* _____ *Children* _____ *Religion* _____
Communication _____ *Handling Conflict* _____ *Parents/In-laws* _____
Love Languages _____ *Understanding gender differences* _____
Other (Please list) _____

Only Communication and Handling Conflict were universally checked. Gender Differences, Sex, and Love Languages were included in over 90 percent of the books

²⁰¹ The exception was one male honeymooner.

read. This would seem to indicate that the writer's emphasis on good communication being the key to good marriage is shared by authors who write about marriage.

When asked to look at the same list to rank their own preferences about which topics they considered most essential for marriage strengthening (question 6), the following graph shows that communication again heads the list.²⁰²(chart 6A)



Questions 4 and 5 have shown that couples are cognizant of these subjects, having recently read books presenting them; thus it is hoped that the data for question 6 are more likely to reflect their true preferences. Therefore, it is cheering to the writer that all but

²⁰² This graph represents a weighting of first, second and third choices.

two of the twenty respondents²⁰³ (90 percent) listed Communication in their top three choices and all but six²⁰⁴ (70 percent) listed the closely related topic of Conflict as one of their top three. Ten out of twenty (50 percent) ranked Communication as their first choice. If a topic such as Finance or Children had been of ultimate or even penultimate concern, the writer might have been sorry she had spent the last four years studying communication. With these results, her efforts do not seem to be in vain. It is good for the church to be concentrating on what both the Bible²⁰⁵ and the membership deem to be important.

Question 6 showed that the sample studied valued good marital communication.

Question 7 asked how they rated themselves at it.

7. *On a scale of 1 to 7, (where 1 is "excellent" 4 is "average" and 7 is "needs work") how would you rate your communication skills? _____*

Only one person sampled chose a ranking of excellent (value =1).²⁰⁶ The writer did not find this surprising for evangelicals, since they have been taught to value humility and avoid boastfulness. It would be interesting to discover if a secular sample, similar in all but faith, would also avoid the number 1 ranking. Four out of the ten (40 percent) female honeymooners ranked themselves with a 2, while only one (20 percent) of the five male honeymooners did. Again, this may not be surprising, since it seems North American middle class culture validates women as being the better communicators. The writer was surprised at the number of female honeymooners who gave themselves below average ratings, four out of ten (40 percent). The numbers themselves do not give a

²⁰³ The exceptions were a female facilitator and a female honeymooner.

²⁰⁴ The exceptions were one male and one female facilitator, three male honeymooners and one female honeymooner.

²⁰⁵ See Chapter 2.

²⁰⁶ A female leader ranked communication in her marriage a 1, and her own communication a 3.

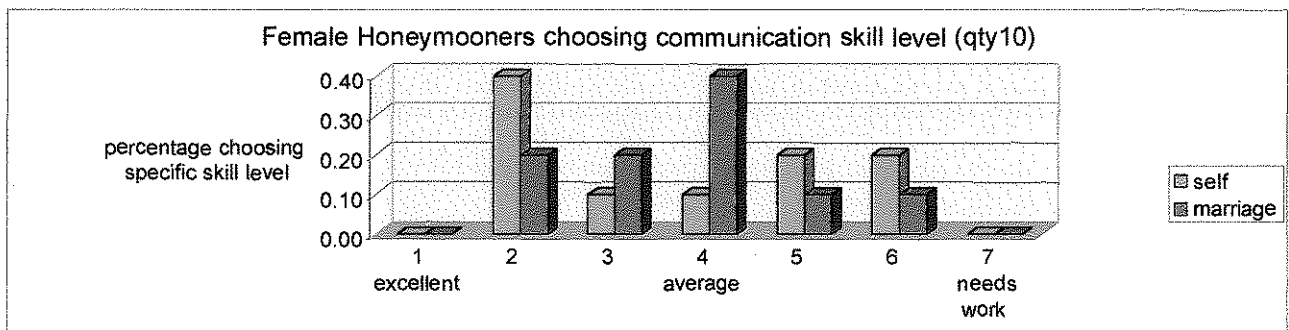
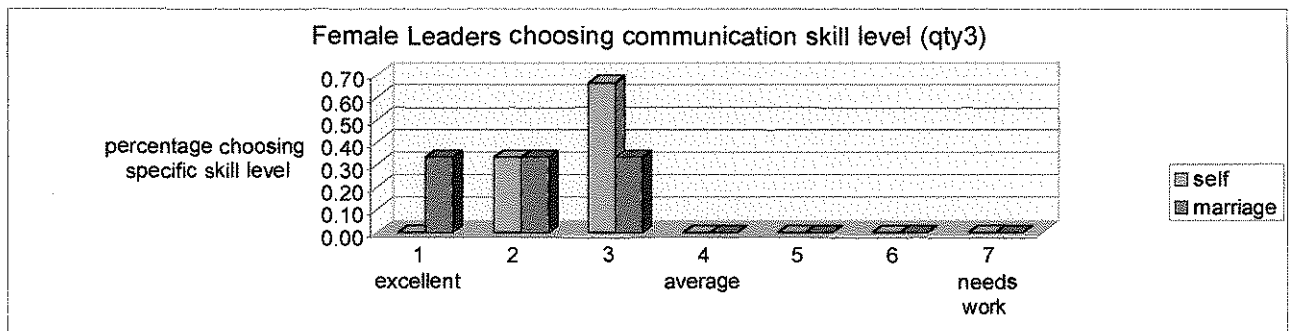
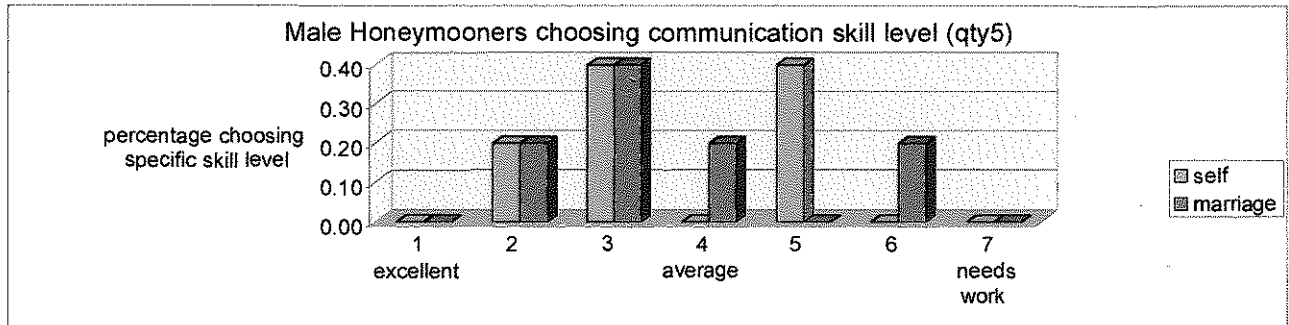
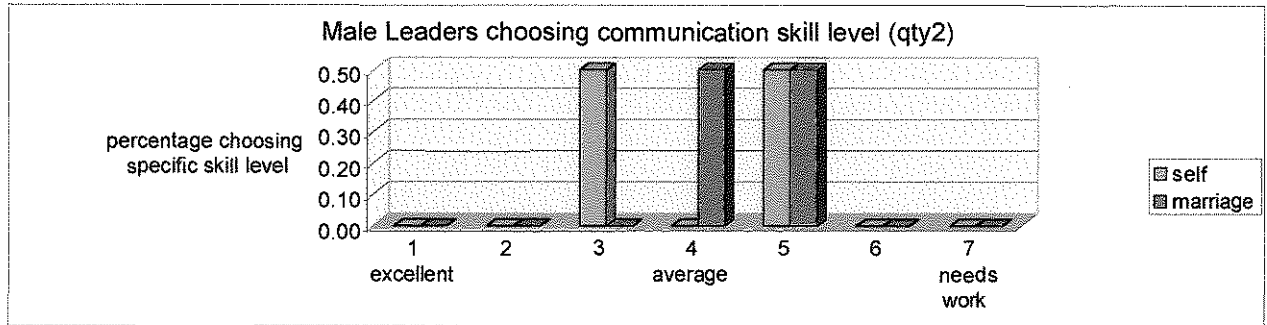
reason for this, but it is interesting to speculate. Did the women not want to rate themselves higher than they thought their husbands might rate themselves? Is the lack of confidence in their ability due to an inferiority complex or have they actually experienced little real success in their communication efforts? If inferiority is the cause, the church needs to do more theological teaching on the nature of the Christian's worth. If lack of skill is the cause, then the church can focus on training such as the Couple Communication Class, reviewed in Chapter 3, offers.

No male ranked himself as low as the females did, though as noted above, only one male ranked himself as high. With two rankings of 3 and 5, and one ranking of 2, the males clustered around the average, though none chose it. Females had a wider range away from the average and only one female honeymooner actually ranked herself with a 4, the true average in a ranking of seven. The writer wondered about this. Do people not like to consider themselves average? Does it seem less dull to be above or below the norm? Or did there just not happen to be any average types in this small sample?

It would be interesting to discover if there is a difference between husbands and wives with regard to their motivation to improve marital communication. The rankings of the male facilitators followed the same general pattern as the male honeymooners. Female facilitators' rankings clustered more at just above average than their honeymooner counterparts did. This may indicate that women see their communication improving over time, but it also may show their idealism flattening as they realize how complex good communication really is.

The following four graphs (chart 7A, 7B, 7C, 7D) show the results of a pairing of question 7 and 8,

8. *Using the same scale as in question 7, how would you rate the communication in your marriage?* _____



Only two out of ten (20 percent) female honeymooners ranked their overall marital communication with a 2, a drop of 20 percent from those who had ranked themselves

with a 2 in the previous question. Twenty percent of the female honeymooners ranked communication in their marriages with a below average score, while female facilitators never ranked their marital communication as below average. Does this mean that “experienced” wives who are helping to lead a honeymooners’ class are embarrassed to rate their own marital communication as sub par? A more hopeful interpretation would be that husbands and wives have actually learned to improve their communication over time. An even better interpretation would be that attendance at church-sponsored, communication-related events over the years has been a key factor in this improvement.

Only 30 percent of the female honeymooners ranked their own communication as better than that of the communication in their marriages. The writer found this interesting because the studies she read indicated that women usually rated their own communication higher than that of their marriages. Could this be an outworking of Christian women’s beliefs about wifely submission? If a wife thinks communication in her marriage is below average, does she fault herself and therefore rate herself lower?

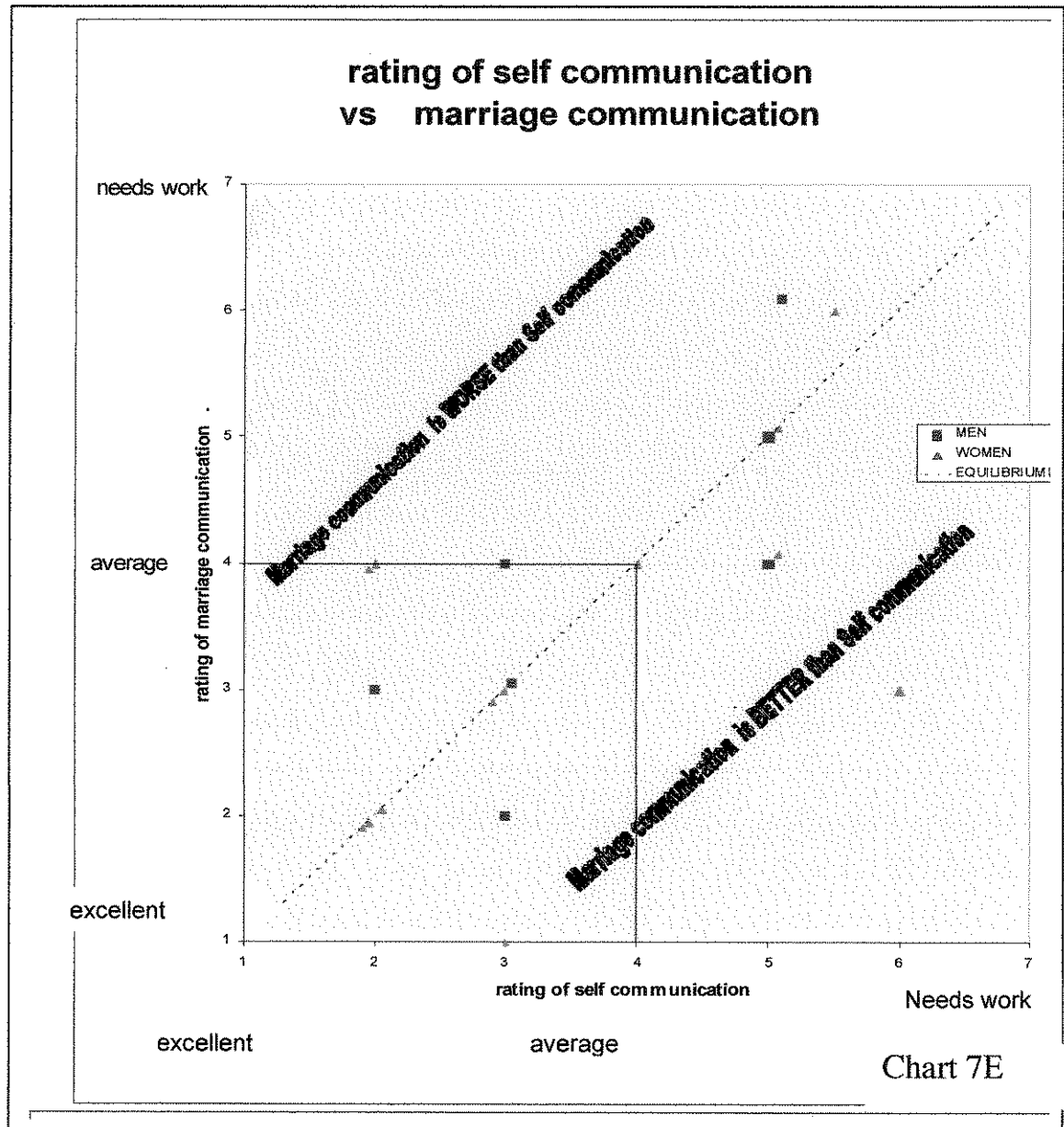
In a similar vein, it seemed noteworthy that forty percent of the male honeymooners ranked their own communication better than that of their marriages.²⁰⁷ The writer would have figured this percentage to be lower as other studies she read indicate that men are usually satisfied with the level of their marital communication, but consider themselves the “weaker partner” in this area. Do male beliefs about the nature of headship in a Christian marriage affect these statistics? If further research indicated that beliefs about submission and headship were negatively influencing marital

²⁰⁷ Twenty percent ranked their own communication as equal to that of their marriage and 40 percent ranked their own communication below that of their marital communication.

communication, it would behoove the church to engage in some mitigating theological education.

Sixty percent of the facilitators ranked their own communication equal to that of their marriage. Only 20 percent ranked their own as better. Again, does this indicate a growth in grace, a relaxing of standards, an increase in marital mutuality versus hierarchy? These could be fruitful areas for further research.

The following graph (chart 7E) is a scatter chart combining the data illustrated in the above four graphs. Furthermore, it illustrates the relationship of each person's values of self and marital communication. The diagonal line from corner to corner represents those who rated self and marital communication equally. Those units above the diagonal line viewed marriage communication as worse than their own communication. Those units below the diagonal line viewed marriage communication as better than their own communication. This graph illustrates an amazing balance in all but one dimension—more women (62 percent) than men (43 percent) gave themselves above average ratings for self and marital communication. This finding would correlate with other studies the writer has read.



So What?

Now that the check marks and the rankings and the testimonials have been studied and filed away, what has been learned? First of all, there is reason to hope. There is hope that the church can meet people where they are with the structures she has already

put in place. This is no small lesson to internalize, especially for Christians reeling from each newly published divorce statistic.

Second, the church does not have to reinvent the wheel. The writer does not believe further research demonstrating that husbands and wives have problems communicating needs to be done. Nor does she believe that the solution needs to be further researched. The professionals, amply cited in chapter one, have shown that there is a problem. They have “discovered” what the church already knew, that communication difficulties arise from both ill-meant intent and lack of skill. Researchers have also shown that the best solution is “booster shots” administered at regular intervals. This is necessary because the effects of even the most stunning intervention usually fade over time.

Third, the church is uniquely positioned to address both the skewed intent and the lack of skill that social scientists have highlighted. Her theology and praxis can bring improvement in these areas should she choose to direct her attention to them. The challenge comes in designing activities that meet the needs of various learning styles and personality types. Kinesthetic learners may prefer a Valentine’s Dinner to a Sunday School class. On a marriage retreat, introverts may prefer a couple quiet time to a small group. Nevertheless, there can be something for everyone without excessive intrusion into people’s already overcrowded schedules and without pastor burnout.

Even the solo pastor of a church need not despair that the task is too great. Consider the following possibilities, which could be implemented over the course of a year:

1. Presenting an annual, brief sermon series focusing on some aspect of communication, or highlighting communication when it is exegetically appropriate.
2. Offering a yearly lay-led Sunday School class for married couples, following a book such as *Marriage Spirituality* by Paul Stevens.²⁰⁸
3. Holding a lay-organized Valentine's Dinner at the church and a "dinners for eight" program in congregants' homes.
4. Offering a lay-led small group for married couples, either a Bible study, a marriage/communication book study, or a video series such as the Alpha Marriage course.²⁰⁹
5. Planning an annual "speakerless retreat" such as the one the writer has already designed.²¹⁰

It seems that an annual line-up such as the one presented above could be accomplished without too much pastoral pain.

The writer believes that if churches have the opportunity to send several stable, married couples to receive training in the Miller, Nunnally and Wackman Couple Communication class,²¹¹ it would be well worth the effort. Studies such as "A Meta-Analytic Update of Research on the Couple Communication Program"²¹² have demonstrated that the class is effective; the writer and her husband can add their personal

²⁰⁸ This book is reviewed in Chapter 3

²⁰⁹ The book that is part of this course is reviewed in Chapter 3.

²¹⁰ The writer would be happy to share this and other "speakerless" retreats she has developed. They do not specifically focus on communication, but any time couples are away "alone together" communication has more opportunity to flourish.

²¹¹ This class is reviewed in Chapter 3

²¹² Mark H. Butler & Karen S. Wampler, "A Meta-Analytic Update of Research on the Couple Communication Program," *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 27 no. 3 (July-September 1999).

testimonies to the scientific research. Other Christian-friendly programs have also been shown to significantly improve marital quality of life.²¹³ The Alpha Marriage video series is one that the writer would like to pilot at Park Street Church, first with some couples in leadership, then using these couples to start new groups. The lesson here may be that it is not so much what the church does, but the fact that she is doing something, that enhances marital communication.

If the reader has traveled through these five chapters, he or she has journeyed far. Perhaps it is fitting to remember a phrase from the quotation that began this odyssey, T. S. Eliot's:

So here I am,...Trying to use words, and every attempt is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure because one has only learnt to get the better of words For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which one is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate..."²¹⁴

It is hoped that the reader now knows that husbands and wives can have more than "shabby equipment always deteriorating." There is goodwill to be nurtured, skills to be mastered, and tools available for success. More importantly, there is an involved, personal God who loves good speech and good listening, a God who not only made mouth and eye and ear, but who also calls himself Word. May each Christian husband and wife make the psalmist's prayer-plea his or her own (Psalm 19:14):

Let the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."

²¹³ Glenice A. Burchard, Mark A. Yarhouse,, Marcus K. Kilian, Everett L. Worthington, Jr., Jack W. Berry, David E. Canter, "A Study of Two Marital Enrichment Programs and Couples' Quality of Life," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 31 no. 3 (2003).

²¹⁴ For the author's phrasing and capitalization see the first page of Chapter 1.

APPENDIX A
Biblical Proverbs Pertaining to Our Words
(New International Version)

The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.
10:8

He who winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool comes to ruin. 10:10

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked. 10:11

Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs. 10:12

Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks judgment. 10:13

Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin. 10:14

He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool. 10:18

When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. 10:19

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value. 10:20

The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment.
10:21

The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out. 10:31

The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse. 10:32

With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape. 11:9

A man who lacks judgement derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue. 11:12

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.
11:13

The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them. 12:6

An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk, but a righteous man escapes trouble. 12:13

From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things as surely as the work of his hands rewards him. 12:14

The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.
12:15

A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult. 12:16

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. 12:18

Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. 12:19

The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful. 12:22

An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.
12:25

From the fruit of his lips a man enjoys good things, but the unfaithful have a craving for violence. 13:2

He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin. 13:3

Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.
13:10

He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command is rewarded. 13:13

A fool's talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them. 14:3

Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright. 14:9

A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly. 14:29

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. 15:1

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. 15:2

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. 15:4

The lips of the wise spread knowledge, not so the hearts of fools. 15:7

A hot tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel. 15:18

A man finds joy in giving an apt reply--and how good is a timely word! 15:23

The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil. 15:28

A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones. 15:30

He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise. 15:31

To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue. 16:1

Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth.
16:13

The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction. 16:21

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. 16:24

A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.
16:28

Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife. 17:1

A wicked man listens to evil lips; a liar pays attention to a malicious tongue. 17:4

He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends. 17:9

A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool. 17:10

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out. 17:14

He who loves a quarrel loves sin; he who builds a high gate invites destruction. 17:19

A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. 17:27

Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue. 17:28

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions. 18:2

The words of a man's mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook. 18:4

A fool's lips bring him strife, and his mouth invites a beating. 18:6

A fool's mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul. 18:7

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts. 18:8 repeated in 26:22

He who answers before listening--that is his folly and his shame. 18:13

The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him. 18:17

An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel. 18:19

From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied. 18:20

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. 18:21

Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse. 19:1

A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense. 19:11

Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise. 19:20

What a man desires is unfailing love; better to be poor than a liar. 19:22

It is a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel. 20:3

The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out. 20:5

Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel. 20:15

A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much. 20:19

Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife. 21:9 repeated in 25:24

Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife.
21:19

He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.
21:23

Drive out the mocker and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.
22:10

An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips. 24:26

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. 25:11

Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear. 25:12

Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone. 25:15

Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart. 25:20

Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. 26:20

As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. 26:21

Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.
26:23

A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit. 26:24 also verses 25 & 26

A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.
26:28

Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips. 27:2

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. 27:5

Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel. 27:9

If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse. 27:14

A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand. 27:15,16

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. 27:17

He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue. 28:23

A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. 29:11

Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him. 29:20

If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your mouth! For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife. 30:32,33

She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. 31:26

Every word of God is flawless, he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. 30:5

APPENDIX B

Thesis Project Retreat Documentation:

Car Talk Handout

For the Couples' Communication Retreat -Spring 2005

It's the weekend! And though you're probably weary and part of you would rather zone out silently in front of the tube tonight, you're here, in the car, headed north beside your beloved spouse to participate in a retreat about communication! Maybe you're wondering what you've gotten yourselves into and are feeling nervous. Maybe you've left behind agitated children, and are feeling torn. Maybe you've had (or are still having!) a fuss with the aforementioned beloved spouse, a fuss precipitated by dashing about in harried preparation for a marriage weekend! A fuss which may have highlighted your poor communication skills! Don't worry! Ask the Lord, the fully compassionate One, to bless you with peace. Take a few deep breaths and enjoy the journey. It's going to be a relaxing time together. You're going to be reminded anew why you chose to spend the rest of your life in dialogue with this person you married. Here are some thoughts to help turn your minds and hearts toward the subject of conversation in marriage. Have fun chatting!

What sort of things do you like to talk about?

What do you think about the following Biblical Proverbs?

An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up. 12:25

He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise. 15:31

Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. 26:20

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. 27:5

Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart. 25:20

He who answers before listening--that is his folly and his shame. 18:13

What do you think about these quotes?

"But a still greater hindrance to listening than the television or a newspaper is that, unconsciously, we often spend time in conversation listening to ourselves. It is as though there is a television switched on inside us which constantly distracts our attention. The other person's words trigger thoughts and memories of our own.

If the husband says, "I was talking to Chris today; he's just lost his mother," a wife might immediately start thinking about what it felt like when one of her own parents died. If a wife says, "As I was driving home the blossoms looked amazing..." a husband's mind fills with gloomy thoughts of how much needs to be done in the garden. Thus our own thoughts and memories obstruct our listening, and our next remark may have little to do with our partner's conversation. It can be hard not to hold a separate conversation in our own head, especially if you are busy and your mind is full. Your aim should be to put your own views and agenda aside and try to grasp what your partner is saying. Steven Covey underlines the impact this has:

If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

Significantly the Chinese character for hearing includes symbols for the eyes, the heart, and the mind as well as for the ear."

Nicky & Sila Lee The Marriage Book p.70.71

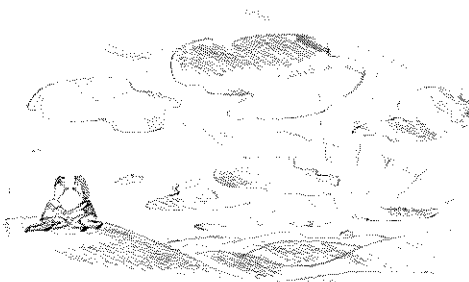
"Words are not, in fact, the neutral entities we might intuitively assume them to be. Each of us develops a relationship towards words, based on repeated experiences of their usage and of the referents which lie behind the words. We know the word 'father' and we know also our own experience of 'father': a kindly figure, a bullying figure, an absent figure, a suffering figure or whatever. We also have some experience of other people's fathers, and we have our attempts to formalize this diverse experience. Inevitably then the word 'father' carries for each individual a connotation."

Peter Cotterell & Max Turner Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation p.46

"People are always much more sensitive than we believe them to be. Often men are just as easily hurt as women, even though they hide it. They are afraid of being hurt by advice just as much as by criticism. They resent it every bit as much. A woman for whom everything seems clear-cut, who confidently tells her husband how he must act in order to do the right thing, no matter what the problem may be--such a woman gives her husband the impression that she thinks him incompetent. No husband can put up with this. Naturally, the reverse is just as true of the husband who replies too readily to the problems his wife confides to him and who wants to give her good advice."

Paul Tournier To Understand Each Other p.24

Do you get a chuckle from these cartoons or do they hit too close to home?

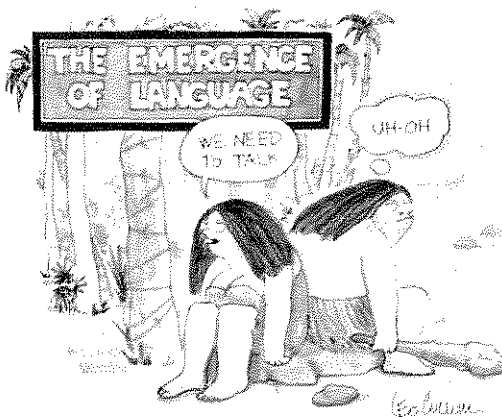


*"I wonder if there is ever a perfect time to tell
someone his hands are sticky."*

Michael Maslin (9/2/2002)

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◀ GIO ▶



Leo Cullin (12/25/1995)

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◀ 769 ▶

Retreat



A Weekend Retreat for Husbands & Wives of Park Street Church

Eagle Mountain House
Jackson, NH
April 29-May 1, 2005

Speaking
the truth
in love,
we will
all grow
up into
him who
is the
head,
that is
Christ.

Ephesians
4:15

MEN MAY BE FROM MARS AND WOMEN FROM VENUS BUT
GOD PUT US HERE ON EARTH TOGETHER SO, WE SHOULD
LEARN HOW TO TALK TO EACH OTHER

For the husbands and wives of Park Street Church
who want to do just that.

Chris May - 2005



Schedule

Friday April 29

8:00 pm Arrive, Check-In
8:30 Registration at Carriage House
9:00 pm Talking Together Welcome & Small Group Time 1 (p. 1)

Saturday April 30

8:30 am Breakfast
9:30 am Couples Time 1 (p.16)
10:30 am Large Group Worship
10:45 Small Group Time 2 (p. 18)
12:00 noon Lunch
1:15 pm Small Group Time 3 (p. 21)
2:30 pm Recreation Time
6:00 pm Date Night
9:00 pm Board Games and Coffee House

Sunday May 1

8:30 am Breakfast
9:30 am Couples Time 2 (p. 26)
10:45 am Worship Together (p. 30)
12:00 pm Lunch and Depart

Welcome

Small Group Time I



Let's introduce ourselves by name, where we live, how long we've been married and how we came to be on this retreat. Also, if you brought your wedding album, show the other couples your favorite wedding picture. Then we'll pick any three of the following "get to know each other" questions and share our answers with the group.



- Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert?
- Do you like talk shows?
- Do you think you are better at listening or talking?
- Do you watch reality TV? If so, how do you feel when the couples fight?
- Share a time when words from someone other than your spouse encouraged or uplifted you.
- Share a time from your childhood when words hurt your feelings.
- When you meet new people, do you worry about having enough to say or talking too much?
- What do you like about your spouse's style of communication? (i.e. "She doesn't bug me when I'm tired," "He doesn't give advice all the time.")
- Do you enjoy talking on the phone?
- Do you ever use humor to disguise how you're feeling?



A significant portion of our time together will be spent reflecting on and responding to various Bible verses, quotes and cartoons that are contained in the following pages. To get a taste of this have each couple turn to either the Proverbs section, the Quote & 'Toons section, close their eyes and randomly point to one of the statements about communication. Take a minute to talk about the content of this selection. Spend 15 minutes or as long as you like to tonight. We'll be using this material throughout the weekend and beyond! Just let the words and pictures be a spark for creative thinking about communication.



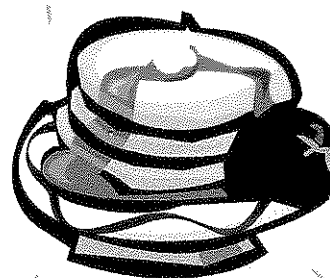
Some questions to consider as we discuss our selections are:

- How would I restate this in my own words?
- What do I learn about communication from this?
- Do I practice what is presented here?
- Do I agree or disagree with this?
- Does this make me feel guilty?
- What emotions does this engender i.e. fear, anger, depression, joy, comfort, freedom, safety, etc.



To close read Ephesians 4:15, 22-32 and 5:1-2. Spend time praying one another as you explore together the importance of communication within marriage this weekend.

**Breakfast will be served
from 8:30 - 9:30
tomorrow morning!**



Pertaining to our Words

Biblical Proverbs

1. He who winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool comes to ruin. 10:10
2. The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked. 10:11
3. Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs. 10:12
4. Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks judgment. 10:13
5. Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin. 10:14
6. He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool. 10:18
7. When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. 10:19
8. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value. 10:20
9. The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment. 10:21
10. The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out. 10:31
11. The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse. 10:32
12. With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape. 11:9
13. A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue. 11:12
14. A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret. 11:13
15. The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them. 12:6
16. An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk, but a righteous man escapes trouble. 12:13

17. From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things as surely as the work of his hands rewards him. 12:14

18. The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice. 12:15

19. A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult. 12:16

*He who guards
his lips guards
his life, but he
who speaks rashly
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Proverbs 13:3

20. Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. 12:18

21. Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. 12:19

22. The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful. 12:22

23. An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up. 12:25

24. From the fruit of his lips a man enjoys good things, but the unfaithful have a craving for violence. 13:2

25. He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin. 13:3

26. Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice. 13:10

27. He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command is rewarded. 13:13

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36. A man finds joy in giving an apt reply--and how good is a timely word! 15:23
37. The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil. 15:28
38. A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones. 15:30
39. He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise. 15:31

*A cheerful look
brings joy to the
heart, and good
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to the bones.*

Proverbs 15:30

40. To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue. 16:1
41. Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth. 16:13
42. The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction. 16:21
43. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. 16:24

44. A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends. 16:28

45. Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife. 17:1

46. A wicked man listens to evil lips; a liar pays attention to a malicious tongue. 17:4

*Better a dry crust with
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Proverbs 17:1

47. He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends. 17:9

48. A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool. 17:10

49. Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out. 17:14

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Proverbs 20:5

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76. A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. 25:11

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praise you, and
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Proverbs 27:2

77. Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear. 25:12
78. Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone. 25:15
79. Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart. 25:20
80. Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. 26:20
81. As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. 26:21
82. Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart. 26:23
83. A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit. 26:24 also verses 25 & 26
84. A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin. 26:28
85. Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips. 27:2
86. Better is open rebuke than hidden love. 27:5

87. If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse. 27:14
88. A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand. 27:15,16
89. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. 27:17
90. He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue. 28:23
91. A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. 29:11
92. Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him. 29:20
93. If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your mouth! For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife. 30:32,33
94. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. 31:26
95. Every word of God is flawless, he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. 30:5

*He who rebukes a man will in the
end gain more favor than he
who has a flattering tongue.*

Proverbs 28:23

Pertaining to our Words *Quotes & 'toons*

We must be reminded that the first condition for mutual understanding is the desire for, the seeking after, and the willing of that understanding. Such a statement may appear very commonplace. Nevertheless, this basic attitude toward understanding others is far rarer than we think.

Listen to all the

conversations of our world, those between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf. Each one speaks primarily in order to set forth his own ideas, in order to justify himself, in order to enhance himself and to accuse others. Exceedingly few exchanges of viewpoints manifest a real desire to understand the other person.

Paul Tournier To Understand Each Other p.8,9

Many couples no longer realize that they are hiding a part of their real feelings from each other, a part of their ideas, convictions and personal reactions. Upon entering my office one husband told me quite sincerely, "I certainly talk everything over with my wife." Afterward, we talked together about many things which interest him vitally. Then I asked him, "What does your wife think of all that?" "Oh," was the blurted-out reply, "I would never mention these to her; she wouldn't understand." In other words, she wouldn't share my opinions, and I want to avoid any argument. Thus it is that in order to have peace many couples put aside certain subjects--those that are emotionally charged--those that are most important for their coming to a true mutual understanding. Thus, bit by bit, the transparent window which the relationship between man and wife should be becomes blurred. They are starting to become strangers to one another. They are losing the total oneness which is the divine law for marriage.

Paul Tournier To Understand Each Other p.13,14

People are always much more sensitive than we believe them to be. Often men are just as easily hurt as women, even though they hide it. They are afraid of being hurt by advice just as much as by criticism. They resent it every bit as much. A woman for whom everything seems clear-cut, who confidently tells her husband how he must act in order to do the right thing, no matter what the problem may be--such a woman gives her husband the impression that she thinks him incompetent. No husband can put up with this. Naturally, the reverse is just as true of the husband who replies too readily to the problems his wife confides to him and who wants to give her good advice.

Paul Tournier To Understand Each Other p.24



"It would be helpful if the first words out of your mouth every morning weren't 'I accuse.'"

II

There are many misunderstood people in this world. But when we look at them close up, we realize that they are always at least partly responsible themselves. If they are not understood, it is because they have not opened up. Why, then, is it that so many people in my office say to me, "With you I can open up, because you understand"? The truth is rather the reverse; I understand them because they open up.

Paul Tournier To Understand Each Other p.25

Here is an even greater mystery: no one comes to know himself through introspection, or in the solitude of his personal diary. Rather, it is in dialogue, in his meeting with other persons. It is only by expressing his convictions to others that he becomes really conscious of them. He who would see himself clearly must open up to a confidant freely chosen and worthy of such trust....The human being needs fellowship; he needs a partner, a real encounter with others. He needs to understand others, and to sense that others understand him. Such is the very intention of God in instituting marriage, according to the Bible. Alone, a man marks time and becomes very set in his ways. In the demanding confrontation which marriage constitutes, he must ever go beyond himself, develop, grow up into maturity. When marriage is reduced to mere symbiosis of two persons essentially hidden from one another, peaceful though such life may sometimes be, it has completely missed its goal.

Paul Tournier To Understand Each Other p.30

Speech itself has a different meaning for men than it has for women. Through speech men express ideas and communicate information. Women speak in order to express feelings, emotions. This explains why a wife will relate ten times an experience she has lived. It is not to inform her husband...But she needs to tell it again in order to discharge emotional tension which the experience has built up in her heart.

Paul Tournier To Understand Each Other p.40

It is much more difficult to bare one's sins to the very person with whom we share our life, and whose love and respect we want more than anything else. The experience may well be reciprocal, for a courageous confession often calls forth another, in response, from one's partner. Then, the tremendous joy shared is a true reflection of the grace of God experienced in the life of his church.

Paul Tournier To Understand Each Other p.54

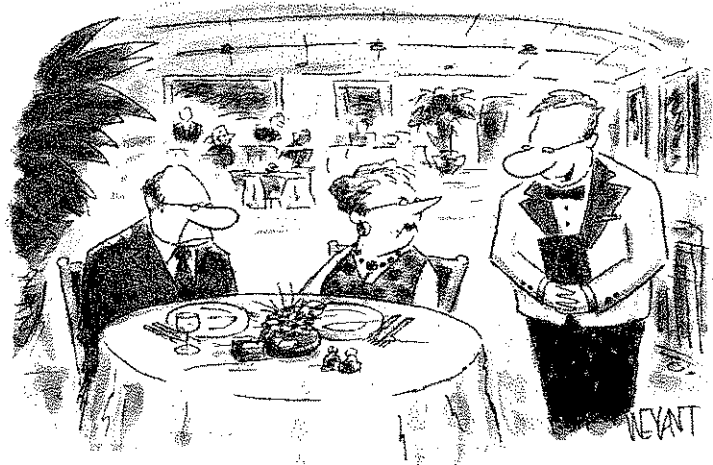
'As well as needing to know that Anna has accepted me unconditionally, I need courage beyond my natural resources. I have found that this sort of courage only comes using God's resources. Without Him I was, and would have



remained, a hopeless case. My best intentions to change would have come to nothing. The most common phrase used about me by all the women I knew prior to becoming a Christian was: 'We never know what you are feeling.' I actually thought I was emotionally retarded and that one chunk of me had somehow remained deep-frozen. It was like walking around with a hidden handicap, hidden that is, until I attempted to get close to anyone. In the last twelve years I have come to see that with God's grace it really is possible to grow together—to have a relationship that gets better with the passing

of years. I have experienced this myself and have seen it again and again in other Christian couples. It is what I always wanted but had thought previously, was the stuff of romantic movies and mushy novels.' What was true about James and Anna's difficulties in communicating is true in many marriages. To communicate is not just to exchange information but means literally to make common our thoughts and feelings. In this way we make ourselves known to each other.

Nicky & Sila Lee The Marriage Book p.53



"Would you care for something to talk about during dinner."

The most common phrase used about me by all the women I knew prior to becoming a Christian was: 'We never know what you are feeling.' I actually thought I was emotionally retarded and that one chunk of me had somehow remained deep-frozen. It was like walking around with a hidden handicap, hidden that is, until I attempted to get close to anyone. In the last twelve years I have come to see that with God's grace it really is possible to grow together—to have a relationship that gets better with the passing of years. I have experienced this myself and have seen it again and again in other Christian couples. It is what I always wanted but had thought previously, was the stuff of romantic movies and mushy novels.



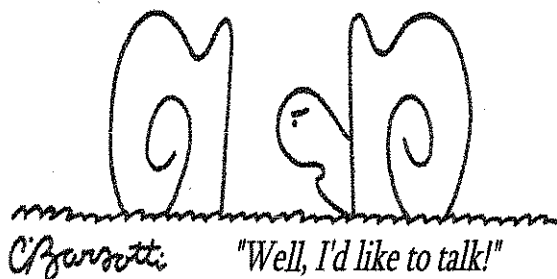
"Of course I'm listening. I'm in a heightened state of alert."

Marriage is one long conversation, checkered by disputes. Two persons more and more adapt their notions one to suit the other and in process of time, without sound of trumpet, they conduct each other into new worlds of thought.

**Robert Louis Stevenson quoted
in The Marriage Book p.55**

The tragedy for many husbands and wives is that they fail to recognize that their greatest effort should be made with each other...If when we first went out with our husband or wife, we had never bothered to talk to them, we would probably not be married now. Relationships grow when we make an effort.

**Nicky & Sila Lee The Marriage
Book p.55,56**



For those of us who feel unable to recognize, let alone talk about, our feelings, change is possible. A good way to start is to write down three or four things (of minor or major significance) that have happened to us over the course of a normal day. Against each of these events, record what you felt about them. For example:

caught the train--felt bored/ alert/tired
made a telephone call--felt angry/hopeful/anxious
went to the bank--felt ashamed/calm/annoyed
met husband or wife--felt happy/tense/excited

It will require courage to begin to articulate these emotions if you are not used to doing so. As you are likely to feel exposed and vulnerable, you must be sure that your husband or wife is not going to reject you, get angry, or blame you for what you reveal.

Nicky & Sila Lee The Marriage Book p.61

Our husband or wife is talking to us about their day. We go on looking at the television or reading the newspaper, making the occasional grunt. The phone rings. It is one of our friends. We put down the newspaper and listen to every word he or she says. Our partner hears us responding animatedly, showing avid interest, deep sympathy, or robust enjoyment during the conversation. There are long silences as we take in exactly what our friend is saying. We motion to our husband or wife to turn the television down and we sit on a chair with our back turned giving the telephone our full attention. Most of us are perfectly capable of listening, but we often neglect to do so with the person we see most and whose voice we hear most.

Nicky & Sila Lee The Marriage Book p.63,64

But a still greater hindrance to listening than the television or a newspaper is that, unconsciously, we often spend time in conversation listening to ourselves. It is as though there is a television switched on inside us which constantly distracts our attention. The other person's words trigger thoughts and memories of our own. If the husband says, "I was talking to Chris today; he's just lost his mother," a wife might immediately start thinking about what it felt like when one of her own parents died. If a wife says, "As I was driving home the blossoms looked amazing..." a husband's mind fills with gloomy thoughts of how much needs to be done in the garden. Thus our own thoughts and memories obstruct our listening, and our next remark may have little to do with our partner's conversation. It can be hard not to hold a separate conversation in our own head, especially if you are busy and your mind is full. Your aim should be to put your own views and agenda aside and try to grasp what your partner is saying. Steven Covey underlines the impact this has, "If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

Significantly the Chinese character for hearing includes symbols for the eyes, the heart, and the mind as well as for the ear.

**Nicky & Sila Lee The Marriage Book
p.70.71**

We need to marry two concepts and never divorce them. Ephesians 4:15 refers to 'speaking the truth in love,' and Proverbs 3:3 (The Living Bible) says, 'Never forget to be truthful and kind. Hold these virtues tightly. Write them deep within your heart.' Love, or kindness, and truth must be inseparable. Unfortunately, at times we think we are being loving by not speaking the truth. At other times we speak the truth, but are unloving as we do so. I wish I could

place love and truth deep in my mind to filter every word I speak. Much would be left unsaid if these two concepts were the strainer used to purify my speech.

Carole Mayhall, Words that Hurt, Words that Heal p.27

In the Bible, the definition of slander goes beyond making false statements. In the Old Testament the word 'slander' was used for bad reports in general. The Hebrew word meaning 'to defame or to strip one of his positive reputation' was used in the account of Joseph's true but 'bad report' to his father concerning the wickedness of his brothers (Genesis 37:2). The same word was used in Numbers 13:32, the account of the ten spies who brought back a negative report about the Promised Land. In the New Testament, the word for slander is comprised of two words, one meaning 'against' and the other meaning 'to speak.' A slanderer, then, is simply one who speaks against another: 'Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it' (James 4:11). Based on the Old and New Testaments, slander is the open, intentional sharing of damaging information and is characterized by bad reports that blemish or defame a person's reputation whether they are true or not!

Carole Mayhall, Words that Hurt, Words that Heal p.54

The fact is that because of the enormous complexity of human communication we are practically never in total control of the communication process. We use words that mean slightly different things to different people, we wear clothes that signal different things to different generations, we stand too close to people or too far from them without always being aware of the signals we are using, we employ gestures that are very open to being misunderstood, and we are all the time unaware of the imprecision of what is being signaled. We think that what we mean is clear. It is rarely so.

Peter Cotterell & Max Turner Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation p.15

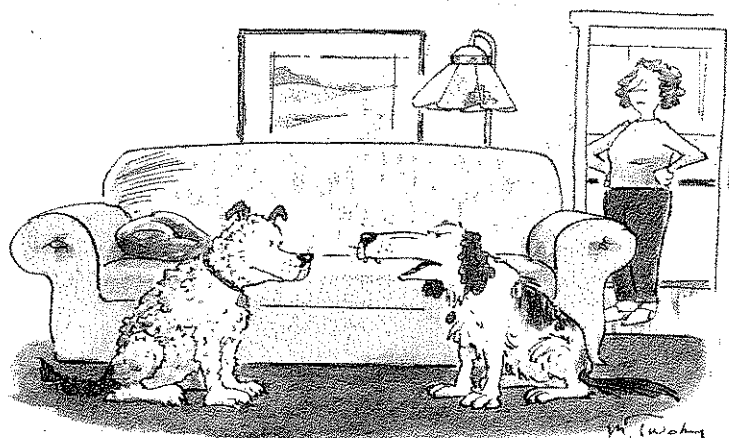


"O.K., step away from the laptop and hold up your end of the conversation."

There are occasions in conversation where the speaker is prepared to move on to the next stage and assumes that others also are prepared to move on, but another speaker is not yet prepared for the advance. In a committee meeting, for example, the chairman might be prepared to move to a decision, the implications of which are still not entirely clear to others on the committee. In such a case a repair is inserted into the conversation: 'So if we agree to this proposal it will not mean raising more money?' The insertion makes it

clear that the speaker has recognized the assumed next step, but is insisting on a return to an earlier stage and a satisfactory completion of that stage before the next step is taken. In computer terminology repair represents a loop in the programme." (Jesus' conversation with the expert in the law in Luke 10:25-37 is given as an example.)

Peter Cotterell & Max Turner
Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation p.274



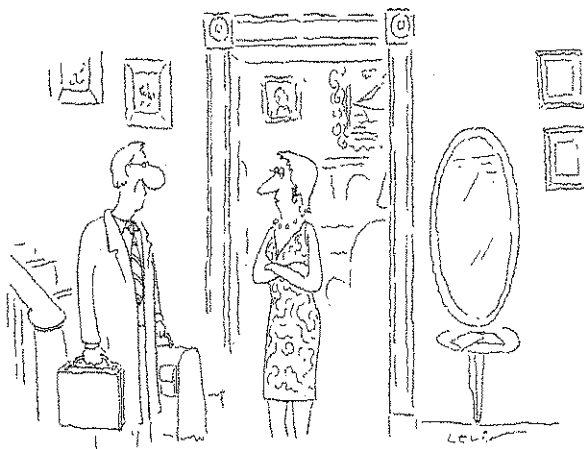
Words are not, in fact, the neutral entities we might intuitively as-

sume them to be. Each of us develops a relationship towards words, based on repeated experiences of their usage and of the referents which lie behind the words. We know the word 'father' and we know also our own experience of 'father': a kindly figure, a bullying figure, an absent figure, a suffering figure or whatever. We also have some experience of other people's fathers, and we have our attempts to formalize this diverse experience. Inevitably then the word 'father' carries for each individual a connotation.

Peter Cotterell & Max Turner Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation p.46

Some conversations do not proceed beyond the initiation stage: having exchanged greetings-pairs the speakers are at liberty to go about their business without causing ill feelings. But commonly dialogue moves on to the discussion of some substantive subject, the topic...It has to be said that topic in the context of conversation is whatever it is intended to be by the current speaker, and this conforms with our earlier insistence that authorial meaning, the intention of an author, is the only real meaning that may be assigned to a text. In summary, then, we may say that it is extremely unlikely that any extended conversation will have a readily definable single topic, that topic may be perceived quite differently by participants, that the current speaker's intended topic is, temporarily at least, the legitimate topic of the conversation, and that topic transition is effected logically.

Peter Cotterell & Max Turner Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation p.268.269



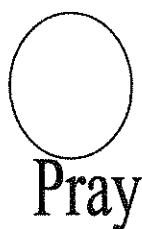
"After you've finished discussions with our allies, we have to talk."

It is generally unacceptable to attempt to pursue a conversation with a person who does not wish to co-operate. In fact the principle of co-operation is sometimes seen as the most important principle governing conversation. However it must not be assumed that all conversations proceed in a spirit of co-operation, but from the principle itself it follows that where co-operation is withheld that constitutes part of the communication and helps to direct the development of the conversation."

Peter Cotterell & Max Turner Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation p.260

Couples Together

Couples Time I



Spend a moment inviting the Holy Spirit to be present and active as you talk. After all, one of His names is Paraclete from the verb *parakaleo*, meaning "to ask to come and be present where the speaker is; call to one's side". Enjoy His good company this morning!



Look back at the Proverbs we began to consider last night. Do you notice how many relate to each other? Group them together to find common themes. Don't feel you have to cover every one of them.

What verbs are used to describe wise and foolish people? What do these Proverbs say distinguishes a wise person from a fool?

From what you have discovered together can you develop a *Proverbial Doctrine of Communication*? If you want, think up a pithy or funny way to express your principles.

Many Biblical proverbs speak of holding one's tongue or not starting quarrels. Yet there are also many proverbs about honesty and the wisdom of giving and receiving a rebuke. What do you think is the balance here?

What do you think is the difference between overlooking an offence and covering over wrongs with love, versus the dysfunctional behavior of continually avoiding controversial topics and stuffing hurt feelings to maintain a superficial peace? What might the former principle look like practically in your marriage?

Do you think you are quarrelsome? What would your spouse say?

Which ones of these proverbs do you think you do well? Which poorly? What would your spouse say?



As you ponder these proverbs, so many cautioning against the evils of poor communication, you may be feeling a bit depressed. Perhaps, in sharing with your spouse, some habits and patterns have been revealed that make you look more like a fool than a wise person. Don't despair! Whenever we bring something into the light, painful though the process may be, that attitude or behavior immediately begins to lose its power to control us. And remember, we serve the God of the Impossible! The Bible affirms this again and again. As Abraham and Sarah laugh over the promise of a pregnancy in their old age, the Lord's word gently rebukes them, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen.18:14) It is the same word Mary receives as she wonders at the logistics of a virgin birth. "Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:36,37) At the end of all his railing against God, Job finally acknowledges, "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted." (Job 42:2) And Jeremiah, though he is peeved with God for instructing him to buy a field outside Jerusalem when He had already informed the prophet that the city was going to be destroyed and handed over to the Babylonians, can still affirm, "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you." (Jer. 32:17)

When the disciples are dismayed over the difficulties of even a rich man being saved, Jesus calmly agrees, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Mat.19:26 & Luke 18:27) Perhaps most poignant and useful to us when we are in the midst of communication failure are these words of Paul, "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' " (2 Cor. 12:7,8)

The God who spoke creation into existence from nothing can recreate positive habits of speaking and listening in the two of you. To remind each other that you already have some good habits, complete the following sentence:

"I like it when you use your words to _____" (possible answers would be something like "tell me I'm gorgeous/a hunk", "complement the dinner I cooked" "encourage me after a hard day at work" etc.)



Spend some time together praying and listening to the Lord now. Close by singing or saying in unison the following hymn, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

Groups Together

Small Group Time II



Let's Talk

Let's look back at the Friday night "get to know each other" questions. We'll pick two new questions and share our responses with the group.

Choose two or three quotes or 'Toons to talk about as a group.

Would anyone like to share some of **their** *Proverbial Communication Principles*? Don't be embarrassed!

We have spent some time reflecting as couples on what the Proverbs say about the talking we do with each other. Now let's see what the Master Communicator Himself does with words. Jesus, perfectly God and perfectly man, knew how to use His tongue well. Not only that, He knew how to listen. (For instance, it is never recorded that He interrupted!) He can teach long lessons and have no one fall asleep, but He can also ask one pithy question that clarifies everything. In fact, Jesus probably asks more questions than any other person in the Bible, certainly in the New Testament, even though He is God and understands people's hearts before they speak! His first recorded words are questions (Luke 2:49) and they season His speech throughout the Gospels. Jesus does not seem to be afraid of stepping on toes, either. He praises, but never flatters. He does not avoid conflict; in fact sometimes it seems He purposely makes a comment that will rile His listeners, or at least disturb their complacency. He is willing to rebuke both beloved disciple and antagonistic Pharisee. What can we learn about communication from this One who is wise with words?



Pray

Before we begin to explore the scriptures, let's pray for our time together.

Perhaps there are times in our married life when our spouse feels like a stranger or even an enemy. Hopefully, most of the time he/she feels like a friend. Distribute the passages below among the group members so that all are covered. ("Calming the storm" is very short so could be combined with another one.) Read your passage silently considering the following questions, as well as anything else that comes to mind, and then report your findings back to the group.



Jesus with Strangers

the Canaanite woman Matthew 15:21-28
 calling His first disciples Matthew 4:18-20 John 1:35-51
 the rich ruler Mark 10:17-23 Luke 18:18-27
 the Samaritan woman John 4:1-42

Jesus with Friends

calming the storm Matthew 8:23-27
 dinner with Mary and Martha Luke 10:38-42
 raising Lazarus John 11:1-44
 the Last Supper John 13:1-38
 breakfast on the beach 21:1-24

Jesus with Enemies

Satan's temptation Matthew 4:1-11 Luke 4:1-13
 at dinner with a Pharisee Luke 7:36-50
 the Pharisees question His authority Luke 20:1-8, 20-26; 22:63-71

- Who are the people directly involved in the conversation? Are there others listening?
- Summarize the setting and the conversation..
- What sort of language does Jesus use? (i.e. questions, rebuke, command, discourse, etc.)
- What do you think His tone might have been?
- What needs do you think Jesus is addressing in His conversation? (i.e. social, emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual)
- In what ways does Jesus show love?
- What evidence do you find that Jesus treats people individually, not just giving blanket answers to questions and statements?
- What evidence do you find that Jesus is observant?
- What evidence do you find that Jesus is a good listener?
- How do people respond to what Jesus says to them?
- Does anything in the way Jesus uses words surprise you?
- Can you glean a *Communication Principle* from this passage?



We've talked about Jesus in dialogue with various people. We know that because He is the perfect Son of God, He never made communication errors. However, this is not the case with us. In fact, sometimes it may seem that we spend more time with our foot in our mouth than out! Let's brainstorm together about hindrances to good communication. Can we come up with ten? Here's one to get us started:

- | | |
|---------------|-----|
| 1. Tiredness! | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

If you want to, during free time talk with your spouse about these hindrances. Which ones are you prone to? Would your spouse agree? Is there anything you might want to do to tackle a hindrance and make it less controlling? Remember, nothing is impossible with God!



Let's close in prayer, beginning by reading out loud the following illustration from Carole Mayhall's book *Words that Hurt, Words that Heal* (p.34):

"A little boy was trying to move a huge rock. He pulled and pushed, and tried to move it with leverage from a board. All to no avail.

His dad asked him, 'Son, have you used all your resources?'

The son answered, 'Yes, Dad. I've tried everything and I can't make it move.'

His father replied, 'No, you haven't. You haven't asked me to help you yet.'

The Holy Spirit enables! He is our resource. He alone enables the light to shine through us—to help us in what we are and what we say so that we can edify other believers."

And, we might add, since this is a couples' weekend, especially our spouses!!

Small Group Time III

Groups Together



Well, if it seems like we were just together, it's because we were! But when we have our group sessions early, it gives us more free time this afternoon and evening. We can get all our thinking done and then play!

So far, we've looked at what the Proverbs say about communication and we've studied some of Jesus' conversations. What does the world say about male/female dialogue? The world can be rather discouraging, can't it? And, even as Christians with the Holy Spirit resident within us, we have to admit communication is hard! Yet difficulty and frustration are only part of the story. To help us think more creatively, let's play a little game. Brainstorm together about ways to complete the following sentences.

Here's an example:

The world says men are from Mars and women are from Venus but...
 God put us together to live on planet Earth so He must mean for us to talk to each other in life giving ways!

Now you try it:

The world says apologizing will threaten your status/admiration level with your spouse, but...

The world says in an argument, it's better to be preparing your next salvo than to be listening to your spouse, but...

The world says it's better to win than give in when you're disputing, but...

The world says you're too...(tired, stupid, selfish, boring, etc.) to understand, listen and talk effectively with your spouse, but...

Good communication is difficult but not impossible!



Given the fact that men and women are different (just look in a mirror with your spouse beside you if you're in doubt about this) and therefore communicate differently, what can we do to overcome the language barrier?

One thing we can do is learn from the burgeoning amount of study in the area of cross cultural relations. As the far flung reaches of the globe become more of a global village, it becomes increasingly necessary that we understand and adapt to cultural differences to avoid mistakes in missions, politics and business which could have disastrous consequences. The principles that are being developed to enable people of widely differing cultures to comprehend one another can also be very useful for husbands and wives. They can help remove accusation--think how often we are tempted to say, "If you weren't so *male/female*, you'd get what I mean!" But if you substitute, "If you weren't so Chinese or Swedish or Kenyan...", it sounds pretty silly, doesn't it? We don't expect someone from another culture to immediately understand us--note all the jokes we have about foolish tourists thinking they can get their message across if they just speak louder and slower. And hopefully we have learned enough from the errors of colonialism not to impose our cultural mores upon those living in a different culture. If we wouldn't think of forcing a Hindu from India to eat a Big Mac, why do we insist on forcing our spouse to use our communication patterns?

Thinking of our spouse as an interesting cross cultural encounter is better than thinking of him/her as an irritating adversary deliberately trying to muddy the conversational waters. If we're trying to clinch a deal with a foreign company, we're willing to expend some energy, effort and thought to make our presentation clear and attractive. Shouldn't we be willing to expend that same amount of effort on dialogue with our spouse?

Talk about the following principles gleaned from the book *Cultural Intelligence; People Skills for Global Business* by David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson. First a definition:

"Cultural intelligence means being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning more about it from your ongoing interactions with it, and gradually reshaping your thinking to be more sympathetic to the culture and your behavior to be more skilled and appropriate when interacting with others from the culture." p.14,15

How would you relate this definition to married life?

In the conversations we studied, do you think Jesus demonstrated cultural intelligence?



According to Thomas and Inkson, cultural intelligence has three components (from p.15,38)

- **KNOWLEDGE:** both of what culture is, how cultures vary, how culture affects behavior and of the fundamental principles of cross-cultural interactions. The first step to cultural flexibility is to understand your own culture and how it affects your interpretation of the behavior of others.
- **MINDFULNESS:** the ability to pay attention in a reflective and creative way to cues in the cross-cultural situations encountered.
- **BEHAVIORAL SKILLS:** choosing the appropriate behavior from a well-developed repertoire of behaviors that are correct for different intercultural situations.

Could these principles be applied to husband/wife communication?
How?

Are they supported by any Biblical teaching you can think of? (It is interesting to note that mindfulness, defined as dwelling in the present moment and being as aware as we can be of the Lord in that moment, has a Christian history dating at least from the early 16th century, with such people as Teresa of Avila and Benedict.)

Do you think Jesus evidenced KNOWLEDGE, MINDFULNESS and BEHAVIORAL SKILLS in the interactions we studied this morning?

This next quote seems like it could be found in a marriage book, with a little rewording. What do you think?

"Being embedded in an unfamiliar setting causes some to learn actively about the new culture, while others attempt to avoid it, often by trying to recreate their old culture in the new situation. The best adaptation is done by those who learn the new culture while still retaining valuable elements of their home culture. By so doing, they cultivate the cultural intelligence that we advocate in this book." (p.25)

How have you adapted in the area of husband/wife communication?
Are you more of an avoider or an engager?
What do you think your spouse would say?



In what ways could you apply the following ideas of Thomas and Inkson about "cultural cruise control" to communicating with your spouse?

Just as we have automatic cruise control when driving a car, we often operate on cruise control regarding culture. From an early age, we carry elements of our culture around with us. Much learning is imitative. Children imitate the attitudes and behavior of their parents and other role models. They become aware of ideas and ways of acting that are considered normal within the confines of their own culture. There are also the deliberate practices of socialization -- learning programs at home, in school, in peer groups, and so forth -- where rules of action, often derived from the culture or subculture, are deliberately passed on to newcomers.

For most of us, cultural cruise control makes our own culture the center of our mental universe and causes us to regard all others as deviant." (p.45,46)

Cultural conditioning teaches us what to perceive and what to ignore. That is, people from different cultures can be presented with exactly the same situation and perceive it differently. (p.47)

If you substituted "maleness/femaleness" for culture, do you think you would have a more helpful grid for understanding your spouse than the traditional "He/she just doesn't understand me and never will because he/she is a man/woman!"?

Would we be less likely to do the following?

"In the cases we have provided so far, (the people) are playing a game that we all play. The game is called *Be Like Me*. Do it *my* way. Follow *my* rules. And, when the other party can't, or doesn't want to, (we) withdraw into baffled incomprehension." p.10

When we're mindful, we switch from automatic pilot to handling the controls ourselves, (recognizing, we must add to Thomas and Inkson, that the Holy Spirit is our Guide and Helper.) Thomas and Inkson present the following ways to develop mindfulness. (p.52)

1. *"being aware of* our own assumptions, ideas, and emotions
2. *noticing* what is apparent about the other person and tuning in to *their* assumptions, words, and behavior
3. using *all of the senses* in perceiving situations, rather than just relying on, for example, hearing the words that the other person speaks



Reflect

4. viewing the situation from *several perspectives*, that is, with an open mind
5. attending to the *context* to help interpret what is happening
6. creating new *mental maps* of other people's personalities and cultural backgrounds to assist us in responding appropriately to them
7. *seeking out* fresh information to confirm or disconfirm the mental maps
8. using *empathy*—the ability to mentally put ourselves in the other person's shoes as a means of understanding the situation and their feelings toward it, from the perspective of their cultural background rather than ours."

Which of these do you think you are most likely to overlook in your interaction with your spouse? What do you think you do well?

Again, though their focus is international business, how do you think that the development of these skills would lead to an improvement in the clarity and companionability of our communication with our spouses?

Sounds like a lot of work, doesn't it? But might it not be work that is worth it? Consider the conversations of Jesus that we analyzed. Isn't it apparent that He was *never* on communication cruise control? That He was *always* fully present to those He was addressing, be it His heavenly Father, His earthly friends, strangers or those who opposed Him? Should we aspire to less?

Thankfully Jesus, and hopefully our spouse as well, do not expect us to be perfect communicators. But making the attempt to improve can add exponentially to the storehouses of goodwill in our marriages. Interestingly, Thomas and Inkson list integrity, humility, inquisitiveness and hardiness as characteristics supportive of cultural intelligence. (p.64-66) Aren't these traits that God also values and therefore is willing to grant grace to develop? Remember Jesus' words which seem to keep recurring throughout our weekend as an encouraging theme--



Pray

Let's close in prayer together. Perhaps there is one of the bulleted aspects of mindfulness that you were impressed was lacking in your communication with your spouse. Or perhaps you've realized you're often on cruise control when you talk to your spouse though you're well able to give your full attention to other friends and co-workers. Or maybe the Holy Spirit has shown you that there are too many times when you view your spouse critically as an opponent to be beaten rather than as an interesting cross-cultural encounter God has given to enliven and enrich you. If that's the case, don't let the weekend go by without asking his/her forgiveness!

On the other hand, perhaps there was also some aspect that you noticed your spouse was particularly good at doing. Don't let the weekend go by without telling him/her! If you want to, hold hands with your spouse as we pray and indicate by a little squeeze if there is something you'd like to talk about later.

Couples Time II

Couples Together

Do your minds feel full of information and things you need to change? Are you feeling overwhelmed or refreshed? Or perhaps both! Hopefully you've had a chance during free time to talk together about some of the things you've been learning. If you want to, take some moments to review and reflect together.



Reflect

No matter how you're feeling about your ability or lack thereof in the communication area, Jesus is with you. Read these words from the Chris Rice song, "Untitled Hymn", take a few deep breaths, give your spouse a hug and read Luke 7:11-15.

Weak and wounded sinner, lost and left to die,
O, raise your head for love is passin' by,
Come to Jesus, come to Jesus,
Come to Jesus and live,

Now your burden's lifted and carried far away,
Precious blood has washed away the stain.
Sing to Jesus, sing to Jesus,
Sing to Jesus and live.

Like a newborn baby, don't be afraid to crawl,
Remember when you walk sometimes we fall.
So fall on Jesus, fall on Jesus,
Fall on Jesus and live.

Sometimes the way is lonely, steep and filled
with pain,
So if your sky is dark and pours the rain,
Cry to Jesus, cry to Jesus,
Cry to Jesus and live.

And when the love spills
over and music fills the
night

And when you can't contain your joy inside,
Dance for Jesus, dance
for Jesus,
Dance for Jesus and
live.

And with your final
heartbeat, kiss the world
goodbye,
And go in peace and
laugh on glory's side.
Fly to Jesus, fly to Jesus,
Fly to Jesus and live.

CCLI #402487

Let the Luke passage serve as a gentle yet insistent reminder that talking is a sign of life! There are many times in Scripture when Jesus heals the mute, causing them to burst forth into speech (i.e. Matthew 9:32-34, 12:22-24, 15:29-31 Mark 7:31-37) This tells us that He likes and values the ability to talk! So, no matter how introverted you are, you can't avoid it altogether. Of course it's better to keep silent than to use unwholesome words, but best of all is to speak in ways that are life and light giving!



READ EPHESIANS 4:20-5:2

Read the passage through for context.

Summarize verses 20-24 using the words "put off" and "put on".

Let's focus for a moment on v.25. To do so more effectively, here is a translation that is a little closer to the Greek, though more awkward in English: "Therefore, having put off falsehood, put on truth, each one with his neighbor, because we are members of one another."

Notice that "put on truth" is the imperative, the command. It's preceded by a "therefore" and followed by a reason, signified by "because". "Therefore" points backward. It gives the foundation for our being able to put on truth. What is that foundation? (see your summary of v.20-24)

Why should we put on truth? (note what follows "because".)

What do you think falsehood looks like in regard to your spouse? Be creative here. It is not just telling a lie. It can involve concealment of the truth. Do you hide an emotion because you fear teasing? Do you hide a desire or dream because it might be shot down? Does your style of communication imply that the frailty of your spouse is greater than the strength of your Lord? Do you withhold praise because you fear it will make your spouse look better than you do? These are all forms of falsehood and are to be cast far from us as we put on truth instead. Sure this is hard to do, but the hardness is not meant to discourage us, but rather to drive us to Jesus for His enabling.

READ VERSES 26-27

There are three negative commands here. What are they? The third negative can be thought of as a reason for the first two; the meaning is "do not give the devil an opportunity to exert his influence (see also 2Corinthians 2:10,11). Do you think this is a strong reason?

How do you handle anger in your marriage? Are you a stuffer or a vent^{er}?

What are the positives and negatives about the way you deal with anger?

What would your spouse say?



READ VERSE 29-32

Verse 29 is a long sentence so let's set it up in a way we can better understand it.

Do not let **any evil word** proceed from your mouth
but (rather) **anything that (is) good**
for the purpose of needed edification
in order that (these words) may give grace
to those who are hearing.
(or take care of the need of those who hear)

Note the contrast Paul sets up between evil and good words. The Greek word for evil here, *sapros*, is very strong. In other contexts it means "rotten". Though it doesn't mean that here, it's a good inhibitor for speaking harmful words to picture them, like rotten fruit, pouring out of our mouths. After all, who wants to be a rotten fruit dispenser? Isn't it better to have our words be graceful, filling up empty, needy places with good and favorable things?

What sort of words do you think are edifying for your spouse? How often do you use these sorts of words in your conversation?

Verse 30 gives a strong reason for obeying the command of v.29. What is it?

Do you see how Paul makes a powerful point when he sets up v.26,27 and 29,30 in the same way? Let's do it, here from the NIV:

Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry **and** do not give the devil a foothold.

Do not let unwholesome talk come out of your mouths **and** do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

Here is yet another impetus for wholesome speech; we don't want to make the Holy Spirit sad!



Reflect

Verse 31 talks about more things we must put off. Verse 32 is positive. We've already talked about hindrances to communication. What are some helps to communication? Can you think of ten? Here's one to get you started:

1. Make eye contact when you talk to each other.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Harking back to v.32, can you think of one way you can be kind, compassionate or forgiving to your spouse with your words in the next month? If you want to, you can write what you decide to do down without telling your spouse. Date it today, then in a month ask each other if you noticed anything different in the communication area!

Say Ephesians 5:1-2 out loud together, preferably holding hands! Remember, no matter how poorly you communicate, no matter how often you fail, you **are** dearly loved children of the Heavenly Father!



Pray

In closing, pray together and then, as we did on Saturday morning, sing or say "What a Friend We have in Jesus" together.

**Join the large
group for worship
at 10:45**



Worship Together

Worship
Service

Song

We've been thinking a lot about words this weekend, so let's open our time of worship by singing together "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing " #164.

What better way to use our words than in praise to our God! Let's continue our worship by singing "He is Exalted"

Word

Leader: Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. Ps.34:3

All: I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be in my mouth. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. (Psalm34:1,2,4,5)

Leader: Father, we come to You wanting our mouths to be places You would feel comfortable inhabiting. We want our words to heal the afflicted, not make them sicker. We want to be free from fear so we can have the courage to be vulnerable, open and gracefully honest. Remind us that shame is not from You. Please open us to the radiance of Your Light so that it might illuminate all our words, basking them in Your love. Amen

Song

Remembering that Jesus is indeed the light of the world, let's sing "Shine, Jesus, Shine" together.

Word

Leader: Jesus always shines, but we don't, do we? If we're honest, "tarnished" might be a better word to describe us much of the time. Let's enter a time of confession with these words from James:

Reader 1: James 1:26 and 3:2-6

Reader 2: James 3:7-18

Reader 3: James 4:1-12

Prayer

Leader: I'm going to mention some sins of the tongue and leave some silence after each one. If something comes to mind during the silence, confess it to the Lord! If what comes to mind is something said or unsaid to your spouse, give their hand a little squeeze as a reminder to confess it to them later.

- Am I a critic or a compassionate friend?
- Where is my attention when my spouse speaks to me?
- When was the last time I used an endearing name to my spouse?
- Am I a nit picker, a petty fault finder?
- Do I pour cold water on my spouse's ideas?
- Do I sow strife or pursue peace in my speech?
- Do I interrupt?
- Do I talk too much?
- Am I usually silent when I'm home alone with my spouse?
- Do I resist my spouse's efforts to engage me in anything but superficial conversation?
- Do I nag?
- Do I use words to subtly manipulate my spouse?
- Do I gossip?
- Do I speak the truth without love?
- Do I avoid difficult discussions, claiming tiredness or busyness?
- Do I regularly ask the Lord to control my tongue?

Prayer

Now we'll spend a moment praying with our spouse. If there are confessions to be made, this is the time to do it! All you need to do is say something like: "Jesus, I realize I have sinned against You by being (lazy, boastful, distracted, unheeding, etc.) toward _____, whom You love even more than I do. Please forgive me and enable me to change this sinful pattern."

We'll all be praying softly, out loud together so only your husband/ wife needs to hear what you say. Remember, things brought into the light lose their power to control.

Time for Couples' Prayer

Word

Leader: John, the beloved disciple wrote, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1John1:8,9) Now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, receive the forgiveness He willingly obtained for you by His death on the cross.

Song

Let's sing "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" #252 and "Create in Me a Clean Heart"

Word

Leader: I hope you're beginning to *feel* thankful; a time of confession made and forgiveness received can do that. Now let's come together in our small groups and *experience* thankfulness! We'll share something that we're thankful for that happened during this weekend. After people have done that, share one prayer request, perhaps in the area of communication, but it doesn't have to be. Then spend some time praying for each other. Come into the middle of the circle as you're being prayed for and if you would like fellow group members to lay hands on you, just say so!

Song

As we prepare our hearts for communion let's sing "Forever Grateful" and "May the Mind of Christ My Savior" #644

*Talking
Together*
speaking the truth in love



Leader: While communion is being given, the songs "Untitled Hymn", "Be Ye Glad" and "How Beautiful" will be playing in the background. Please give the cup and the bread to your spouse, saying, "This is the Body of Christ, broken for you" and "This is the Blood of Christ, shed for you." When you have both partaken, say in unison the words from Psalm 34:3--"Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together."

Song

Leader: Let's close by singing "May the Mind of Christ My Savior" #644 and "Take My Life and Let it Be" #586

Word

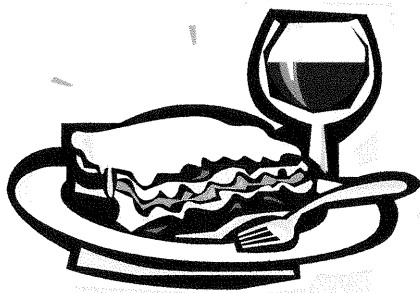
Leader: Now receive the benediction, one from Isaac of Stella (1169) and one from Paul.

"May the Son of God, who is already formed in you, grow in you, so that for you He will become immeasurable; and that in you he will become laughter, exultation, the fullness of joy, which no one can take from you." Isaac of Stella

"Let your conversation always be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:6

Go in peace and blessed speech!

Please don't forget to fill out and turn in your surveys!



**Brunch starts at
12:00 sharp!**

Works Cited

Cotterell, Peter & Turner, Max, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1989.

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Mayhall, Carole, *Words that Hurt, Words that Heal*, Colorado Springs, NavPress, 1987.

Thomas, David C. and Inkson, Kerr, *Cultural Intelligence; People Skills for Global Business*, San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2004.

Tournier, Paul, *To Understand Each Other*, Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1962.

O for a Thousand tongues to Sing #164

At the Name of Jesus #163

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross #252

Possible songs from Thurs morn hymn book

Be Bold, Be strong #8 (a theme song to encourage us to be vulnerable?)

O be magnified !!! #10

Create in me a clean heart #14

Forever Grateful #20 (to remind us to take the first step in sharing)

He is exalted #26

How High and How Wide #33

I Will Never be the Same Again #41

Sanctuary #61

Shine, Jesus, Shine #62

Shout to the Lord #63

Red Hymn book

**At some point sing Take my life and let it be no. 586 red book

Fill thou My Life, O Lord My God #589

**May the Mind of Christ My Savior #644

Take thou our Minds Dear Lord #593

APPENDIX C
Survey, Data and Graphs

Survey

Gender_____

How long married_____

Age_____

1. Approximately how many times did you attend any Sunday church service last month? _____

2. Over the past year how many of the following events did you attend? (If you attended more than one retreat, for instance, indicate how many in the blank.)
Retreat_____

- Conference_____

- Seminar_____

- Adult Sunday School Class_____

- Church Sponsored Social Event_____

- Small Group

- Weekly _____

- Bi-weekly _____

- Monthly _____

3. Were any of these events specifically related to marriage/communication/relationships? If so, explain briefly.

4. In the past 2 years approximately how many books did you read about marriage? _____

5. As you recall, which of the following topics were covered? Check all that apply.

Finances_____

Sex_____

Children_____

Religion_____

Communication_____ Handling Conflict_____ Parents/In-laws_____
Love Languages_____ Understanding gender differences_____
Other (Please list)_____

6. Of the topics listed above, which 3 would you consider the most essential for marriage strengthening? List in order of importance to you.

7. On a scale of 1 to 7, (where 1 is "excellent" 4 is "average" and 7 is "needs work") how would you rate your communication skills? _____

8. Using the same scale as in question 7, how would you rate the communication in your marriage? _____

9. Which of the following church sponsored activities would you be most likely to attend? Choose 3 and rank in order of preference with 1 being "most likely."

Couples' Retreat_____

Single Sex Retreat_____

Adult Sunday School Class on Marriage_____

Adult Sunday School Class on Communication_____

Relationship Focussed Small Group/Bible Study_____

Downtown Breakfast Series on Communication_____

Downtown Luncheon Series on Communication_____

All Church Social Event_____

Age Related Church Social Event_____

Married Couple Church Social Event_____

original questionnaire data

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Leader of class (L or newlywed (H))	Approximately how many times did you attend Sunday church service last month	Over the past year how many of the following events did you participate in (repeating events count as 1 each)	Were any events specifically related to marriage / communication / relationships?	In the past 2 years approximately how many times did you read about marriage	As you recall, which of the following topics were covered? Check all that apply (1=checked, 0=not checked)	Of the topics listed, which 3 would you consider the most essential for strengthening? List them in order of importance	On a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 is excellent, 7 is needs work) how would you rate the communication in your marriage? (using the same scale as above)	How would you rate the communication in your marriage? (using the same scale as above)	Which of the following Church sponsored activities would you be most likely to participate in? Choose 3 and rank them in order of importance	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
age	years married	Small group monthly	Small group bi weekly	Small group weekly	social event	ss class	seminar	conf	retreat	finances	sex	children	religion	communication	aging parents	love lang	gender difference	other	married couple social event
male or female	survey #																		age related social event
																			all church social event
																			luncheon series on communication
																			breakfast series communication
																			relationally focused small group study
																			Sunday class communication
																			Sunday class - marriage
																			single gender retreat
																			couples retreat
1	M	30	55	L															
2	M	14	47	L															
3	F	8	30	L															
4	F	14	42	L															
5	F	29	56	L															
6	M	4	28	H															
7	M	4	28	H															
8	F	4	23	H															
9	F	1	24	H															
10	F	1	26	H															
11	F	1	27	H															
12	F	1	28	H															
13	F	0	32	H															
14	F	1		H															
15	M	0	36	H															
16	F	1	23	H															
17	F	1	39	H															
18	M	1	40	H															
19	F	27	28	H															
20	M	1	27	H															

Data and Graphs

question 3 asks: were any of these events specifically related to marriage /communication/ relationships? If so explain briefly.

- 1 the Sunday school class (SS) with newlyweds was on marriage, communication and relationships.
- 2 no
- 3 small group - marriage; SS- honeymooners & children
- 4 ss-honeymooners; ss- raising adolescents; couples retreat
- 5 ss-honeymooners; ss- raising adolescents/parenting; couples marriage retreat;valentines dinner
- 6 ss-honeymooners
- 7 ss-honeymooners
- 8 ss-honeymooners
- 9 engaged couples class, ss-honeymooners
- 10 ss-honeymooners
- 11 ss-honeymooners
- 12 ss- honeymooners, focused on marriage
- 13 engaged couples class, ss-honeymooners
- 14
- 15 engaged couples class, ss-honeymooners
- 16 ss-honeymooners
- 17 ss-on dating, ss-honeymooners;couples bible study
- 18 ss-on dating, ss-honeymooners;couples bible study
- 19 engaged couples class, honeymooners class, park street union pizza socials
- 20 engaged couples class, honeymooners class, park street union pizza socials

weighted data where #1= the number of total choices in that field. #2 = n-1 . #3=n-2. no choice =0																														
question #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Which of the following Church sponsored activities would you be most likely to attend? rank in order of preference 1= most preferred																				
question:	Approximately how many times did you attend Sunday church service last month										Of the topics listed, which 3 would you consider most essential for marriage strength (order of importance. 1= most essential)										How would you rate the communication marriage? (using the following scale: 1= excellent, 2= good, 3= fair, 4= needs work, 5= poor)									
	Leader of class (L or newlywed)	Small group mon	Small Grp bi wk	Small group wkl	social ever	ss class*	semina	conf	retr	financ	sex	childrer	religio	communicat	conflic	aging paren	love lang	gender differen	othe											
age	30-55 L	5	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
years marri	2 M	14	47	L	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
male or Fem	3 F	8	30	L	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
survey f	4 F	14	42	L	5	2	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
5 F	29	56	L	5	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
6 M	4	28	H	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
7 M	4	28	H	4	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
8 F	4	23	H	4	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
9 F	1	24	H	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
10 F	1	26	H	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
11 F	1	27	H	5	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
12 F	1	28	H	4	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
13 F	0	32	H	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
14 F	1	H	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
15 M	0	36	H	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
16 F	1	23	H	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
17 F	1	39	H	7	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
18 M	1	40	H	7	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
19 F	27	28	H	4	1	2	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
20 M	1	27	H	4	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1											
sum of weighted values of the										8	36	0	74	145	107	7	40	24												
										91	18	74	60	94	18	0	45	8	135											

page 159

Question 1: Approximately how many times did you attend any Sunday church service last month? (12/2006)

survey #	male or female	years married	age	Leader of class (L or new/wed (H)	0	average
1	M		30	55 L	5 leaders	4.4
2	M		14	47 L	3	
3	F		7.5	30 L	4 honeymoon	4.3
4	F		14	42 L	5	
5	F		29	56 L	5	
6	M		4	28 H	4	
7	M		4	28 H	4	
8	F		4	23 H	4	
9	F		0.8	24 H	3	
10	F		1	26 H	4	
11	F		0.5	27 H	5	
12	F		0.5	28 H	4	
13	F		0.2	32 H	4	
14	F		1	0 H	4	
15	M		0.25	36 H	3	
16	F		0.5	23 H	4	
17	F		0.5	39 H	7	
18	M		0.5	40 H	7	
19	F		27	28 H	4	
20	M		0.5	27 H	4	

question #2 and 9

show whether people prefer didactic or social events

separate respondents into two groups, leaders (L) and Sunday school attendees (newlywed class (H))

1. import the original data, and the weighted data from q 9,

import data from weighted data, question 9

weighted data where #1= the number of total choices in that field,

#2 = n-1 . #3=n-2. no choice =0

import data from original data question 2

Over the past year how many of the following events did you attend?
(series = 1*)

[illegible]

Which of the following Church sponsored activities would you be most likely to attend?
of preference with 1 being most likely.

[illegible]

2. arrange the groupings into the two categories

retreat	social	
conf		didactic
seminar		didactic
ss class*		didactic
social event	social	
Small group wkly*	social	
small Grp bi wkly*	social	
Small grp month*	social	

couples retreat	social	
single gender retreat	social	
Sunday class- marriage		didactic
Sunday class communication		didactic
relationally focused small group/bi	social	
breakfast series communication		didactic
luncheon series on communication		didactic
all church social event	social	
age related social event	social	
married couple social event	social	

question #2 and 9 (cont)

4. Break the tables into leaders and newlywed class attenders

5. Total the past year attendance for all leaders

total of all leaders	2	0	10	8	14	4	1	2	25	25	38	10	0	0	20	10	0	10
----------------------	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	---	----	----	----	----	---	---	----	----	---	----

6. Run a total of the weighted responses, since we will deal with percentages, the weighting will not change the data appreciably

7. Group the responses into the two groups, by totaling the social totals, and the didactic totals

didactic	2	0	10	8	14	4	1	2	25	25	38	10	social	0	0	20	10	0	10
----------	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	---	----	----	----	----	--------	---	---	----	----	---	----

totaling

didactic	social
12	29

didactic	social
98	40

8. Make a pie chart of the two categories for both groups of leaders

LEADERS attendance by events classified as didactic or social

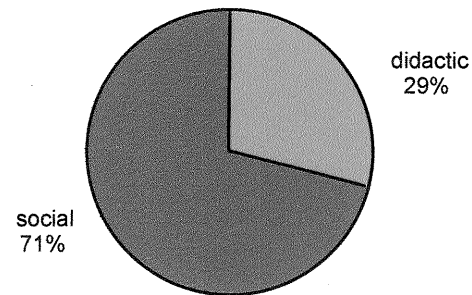


chart 2A

LEADERS events preferred, classified as didactic or social (Question #9)

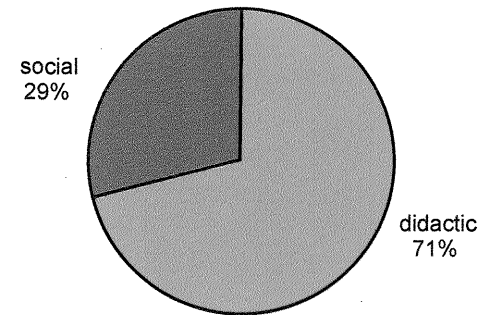


chart 9A

question #2 and 9 (cont)

9. Total the past year attendance for all newlyweds

total of all
newlyweds

4	4	14	4	37	9	2	1	49	35	53	8	18	0	74	35	8	125
---	---	----	---	----	---	---	---	----	----	----	---	----	---	----	----	---	-----

10. Run a total of the weighted responses, since we will deal with percentages, the weighting will not change the data appreciably

11. Group the responses into the two groups, by totaling the social totals, and the didactic totals

didactic	social
4	4
14	4
37	9
2	1

didactic	social
49	35
53	8
18	0
74	35
8	125

totaling

didactic	social
22	53

didactic	social
145	260

12. Make a pie chart of the two categories for both groups

NEWLYWEDS attendance by events classified as didactic or social

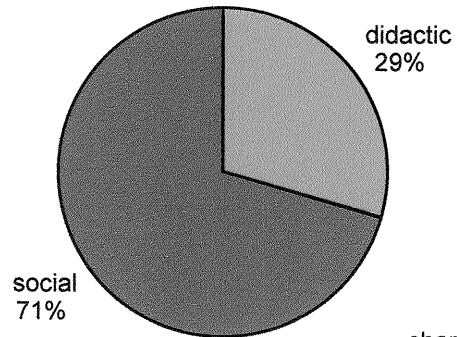


chart 2B

NEWLYWEDS events preferred, classified as didactic or social (Question #9)

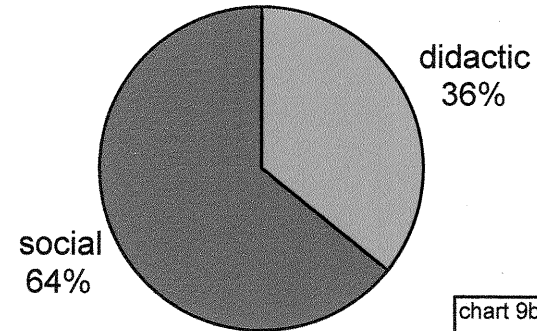


chart 9b

question 4

question 4										
question #	4									
question	In the past 2 years approximately how many books									
	Leader of class (L or newly	age	years mar	male or fem	survey					
1	1 M	30	55 L			1	1 M	30	55 L	1
2	2 M	14	47 L			2	2 M	14	47 L	2
3	3 F	7.5	30 L			2	3 F	7.5	30 L	2
4	4 F	14	42 L			1	4 F	14	42 L	1
5	5 F	29	56 L			5	5 F	29	56 L	5
6	6 M	4	28 H			0	6 M	4	28 H	0
7	7 M	4	28 H			3	7 M	4	28 H	3
8	8 F	4	23 H			1	8 F	4	23 H	1
9	9 F	0.8	24 H			3	9 F	0.8	24 H	3
10	10 F	1	26 H			1	10 F	1	26 H	1
11	11 F	0.5	27 H			1	11 F	0.5	27 H	1
12	12 F	0.5	28 H			4	12 F	0.5	28 H	4
13	13 F	0.2	32 H			2	13 F	0.2	32 H	2
14	14 F	1	H			1	14 F	1	H	1
15	15 M	0.25	36 H			2	15 M	0.25	36 H	2
16	16 F	0.5	23 H			3	16 F	0.5	23 H	3
17	17 F	0.5	39 H			4	17 F	0.5	39 H	4
18	18 M	0.5	40 H			8	18 M	0.5	40 H	8
19	19 F	27	28 H			5	19 F	27	28 H	5
20	20 M	0.5	27 H			2	20 M	0.5	27 H	2

average # of books read in pa	2.2 leaders
2.6666666666666666 neymooners	
2.5384615384615384 male	
2.5714285714285714 male	

1	5	2.2	3 F	7.5	30 L	2	13	2.538
2			4 F	14	42 L	1		
2			5 F	29	56 L	5		
1			8 F	4	23 H	1		
5			9 F	0.8	24 H	3		
0	15	2.667	10 F	1	26 H	1		
3			11 F	0.5	27 H	1		
1			12 F	0.5	28 H	4		
3			13 F	0.2	32 H	2		
1			14 F	1	H	1		
1			16 F	0.5	23 H	3		
4			17 F	0.5	39 H	4		
2			19 F	27	28 H	5		
1			1 M	30	55 L	1	7	2.571
2			2 M	14	47 L	2		
3			6 M	4	28 H	0		
4			7 M	4	28 H	3		
8			15 M	0.25	36 H	2		
5			18 M	0.5	40 H	8		
2			20 M	0.5	27 H	2		

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question #

6

10

the weighted data summary of question 6

reorient the data so it can be sorted

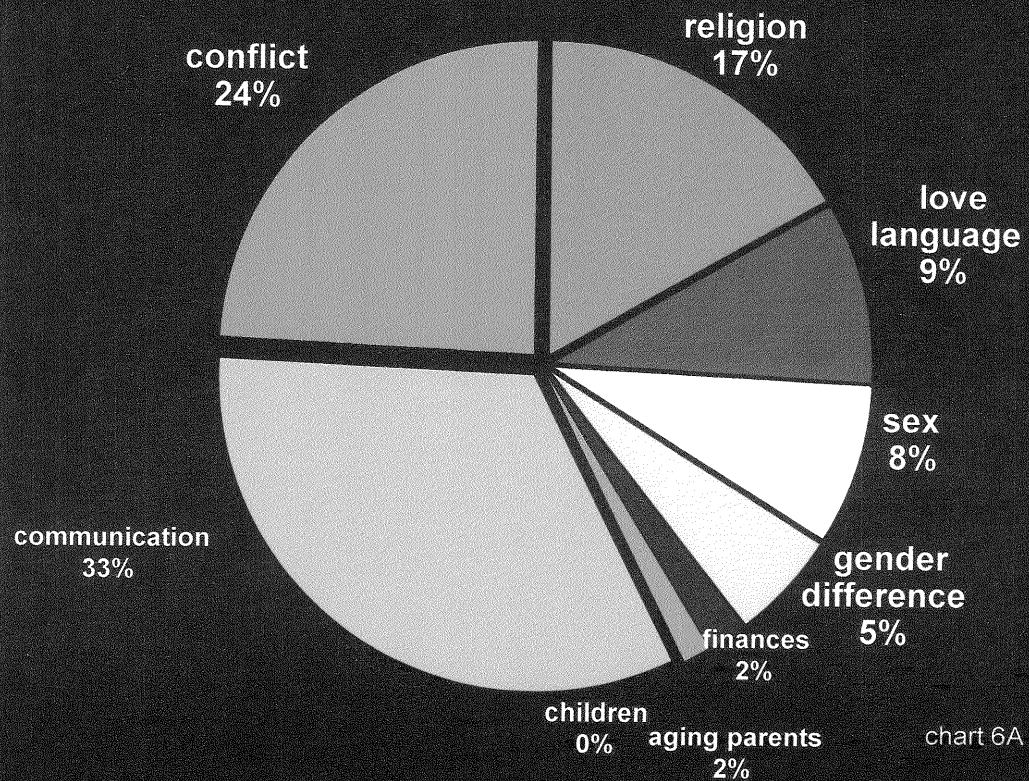
finances	8
sex	36
childre	0
religion	74
communicati	145
conflict	107
aging parents	7
love lang	40
gender differ	24

then sort the data highest to lowest, and
then since it is a circular pie, rotate
so it represents well in the chart
communication to the bot

religion	74
love lang	40
sex	36
gender differ	24
finances	8
aging parents	7
childre	0
communi ca	145
conflict	107

then make a pie chart of this d.

Listed topics judged most essential for marriage strengthening (question#6)



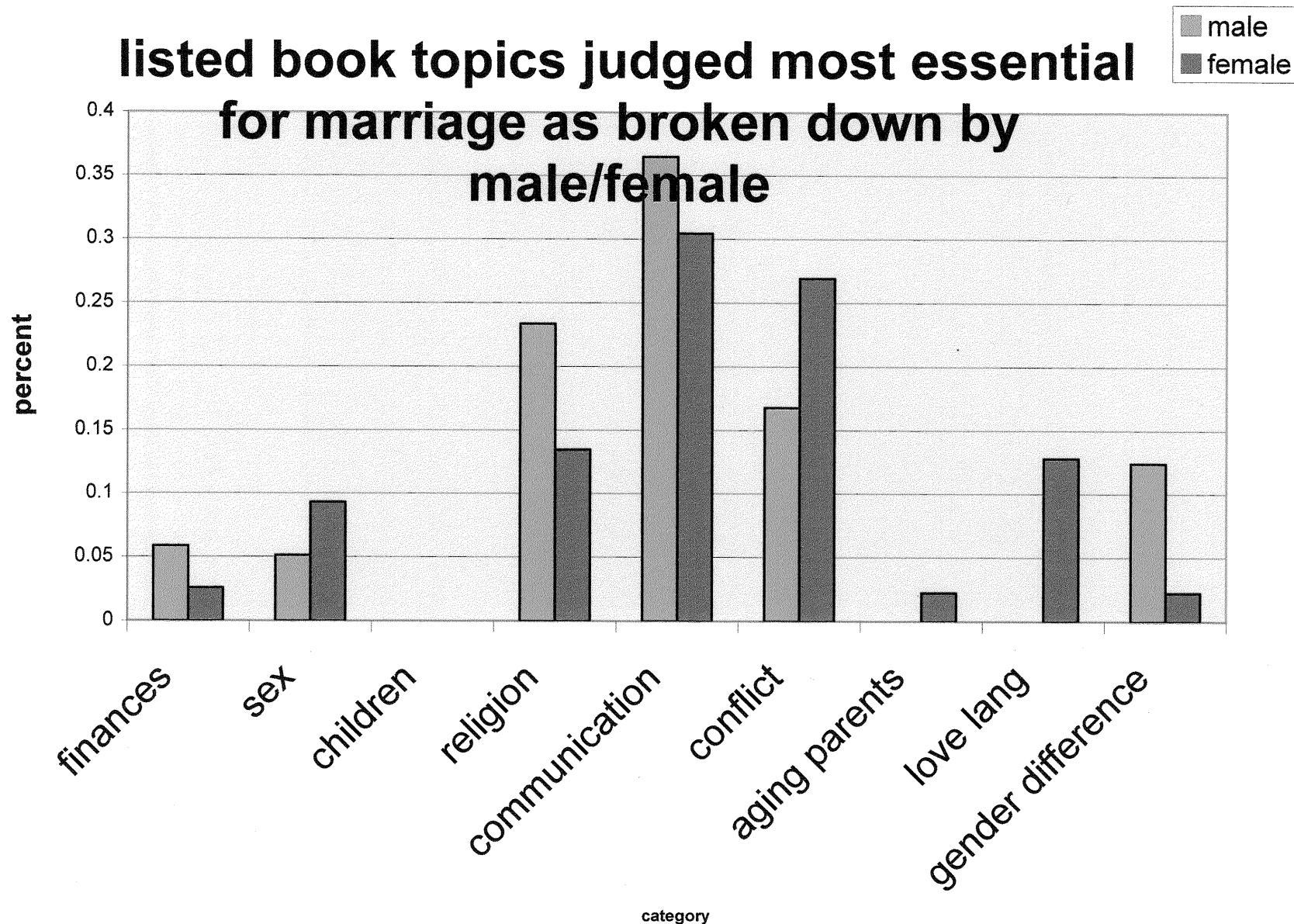
question #6 (cont)

the weighted data summary of question 6

the weighted data summary of question 6, separated into male/female

[illegible][illegible]

listed book topics judged most essential for marriage as broken down by male/female



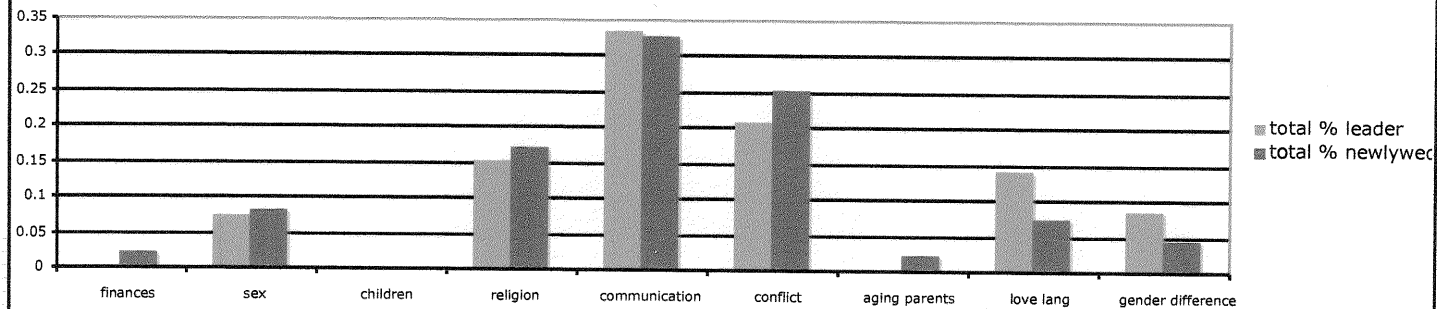
the weighted data summary of q
separated into lead

	finances	sex	children	religion	communication	conflict	aging parents	love lang	gender differen	other
L-L-leader of clas	0	8	0	16	35	22	0	15	9	0
newlywec	8	28	0	58	110	85	7	25	15	0

question #6 (cont)

	total % leader	total % newlywed
finances	0	0.02
sex	0.08	0.08
children	0	0
religion	0.15	0.17
communication	0.33	0.33
conflict	0.21	0.25
aging parents	0	0.02
love lang	0.14	0.07
gender difference	0.09	0.04
other	0	0

listed book topics judged most essential for marriage as broken down by lead



question 7 data manipulation for chart 7A,7B,7C,7D

compare male/female newlyweds in how they ranked themselves.

compare male/female newlyweds in how they ranked their marriages

original data

question #	survey #	male or female	Leader of class (L or newlyweds) (H)	7 (where 1 is excellent, average, needs work)	8 rate the communication your man is using
	1	M	L	5	5
	2	M	L	3	4
	6	M	H	5	4
	7	M	H	3	2
	15	M	H	3	3
	18	M	H	2	3
	20	M	H	5	6
	3	F	L	3	1
	4	F	L	2	2
	5	F	L	3	3
	8	F	H	2	4
	9	F	H	6	4
	10	F	H	2	4
	11	F	H	2	2
	12	F	H	2	2
	13	F	H	5	4
	14	F	H	4	4
	16	F	H	5.5	6
	17	F	H	3	3
	19	F	H	5	5

pull the data as a histogram for each group

translate the frequency data to a percentage frequency

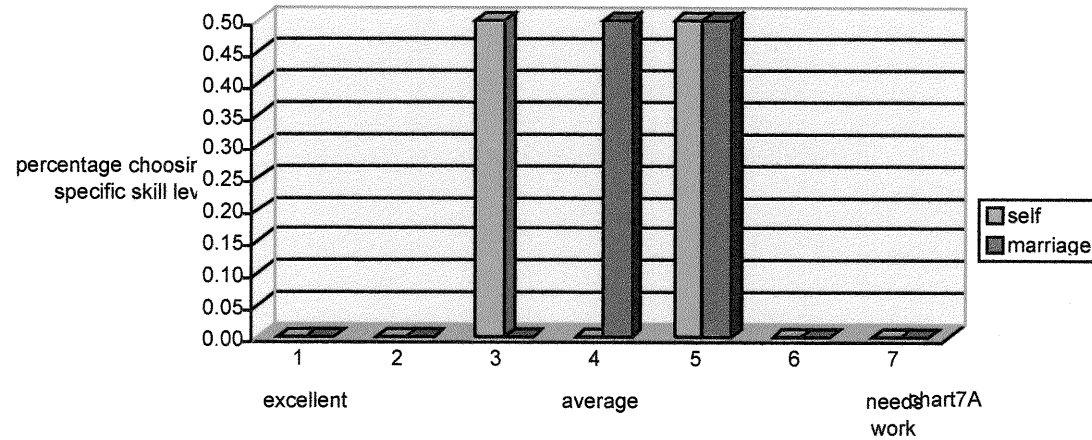
MALE LEADERS					
Bin	Frequency		Bin	Frequency	
1	0	0.00	1	0	0.00
2	0	0.00	2	0	0.00
3	1	0.50	3	0	0.00
4	0	0.00	4	1	0.50
5	1	0.50	5	1	0.50
6	0	0.00	6	0	0.00
7	0	0.00	7	0	0.00
More	0	0.00	More	0	0.00
2					
MALE HONEYMOONERS					
Bin	Frequency		Bin	Frequency	
1	0	0.00	1	0	0.00
2	1	0.20	2	1	0.20
3	2	0.40	3	2	0.40
4	0	0.00	4	1	0.20
5	2	0.40	5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00	6	1	0.20
7	0	0.00	7	0	0.00
More	0	0.00	More	0	0.00
5					
FEMALE LEADERS					
Bin	Frequency		Bin	Frequency	
1	0	0.00	1	1	0.33
2	1	0.33	2	1	0.33
3	2	0.67	3	1	0.33
4	0	0.00	4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00	5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00	6	0	0.00
7	0	0.00	7	0	0.00
More	0	0.00	More	0	0.00
3					
FEMALE HONEYMOONERS					
Bin	Frequency		Bin	Frequency	
1	0	0.00	1	0	0.00
2	4	0.40	2	2	0.20
3	1	0.10	3	2	0.20
4	1	0.10	4	4	0.40
5	2	0.20	5	1	0.10
6	2	0.20	6	1	0.10
7	0	0.00	7	0	0.00
More	0	0.00	More	0	0.00
10					

self marriage male leaders			
excellent	1	0.00	0.00
	2	0.00	0.00
	3	0.50	0.00
average	4	0.00	0.50
	5	0.50	0.50
	6	0.00	0.00
needs work	7	0.00	0.00
self marriage male honeymooners			
excellent	1	0.00	0.00
	2	0.20	0.20
	3	0.40	0.40
average	4	0.00	0.20
	5	0.40	0.00
	6	0.00	0.20
needs work	7	0.00	0.00
self marriage female leaders			
excellent	1	0.00	0.33
	2	0.33	0.33
	3	0.67	0.33
average	4	0.00	0.00
	5	0.00	0.00
	6	0.00	0.00
needs work	7	0.00	0.00
self marriage female honeymooners			
excellent	1	0.00	0.00
	2	0.40	0.20
	3	0.10	0.20
average	4	0.10	0.40
	5	0.20	0.10
	6	0.20	0.10
needs work	7	0.00	0.00

plot individual graphs

CHART 7A AND 7B

Male Leaders choosing communication skill level (qty2)



Male Honeymooners choosing communication skill level (qty5)

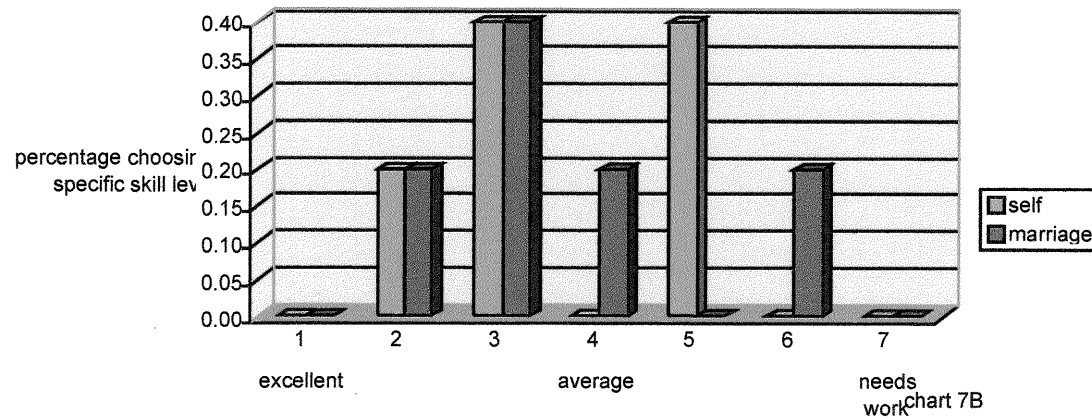
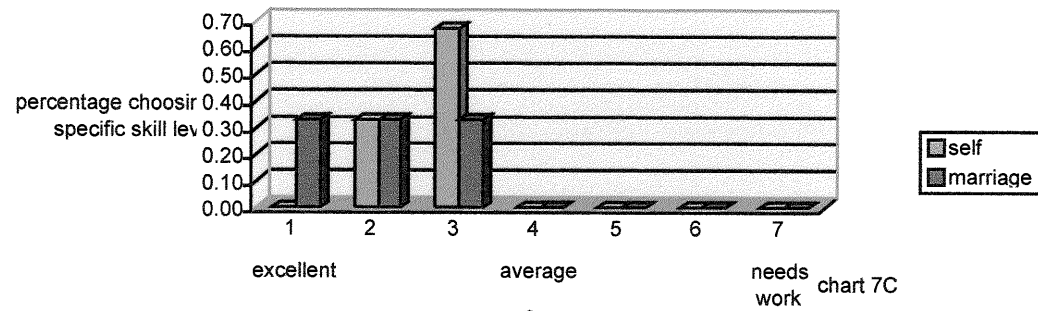
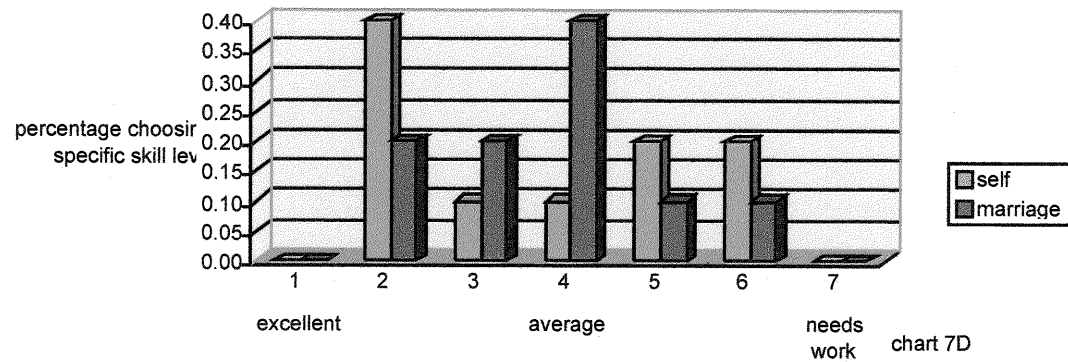


CHART 7C AND 7D

Female Leaders choosing communication skill level (qty3)



Female Honeymooners choosing communication skill level (qty10)



question 7 data for chart 7 E

survey #	male or Female	Leader of class (L or newlywed (H)	On a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 is excellent, 4 is average work) how would you rate y	How would you rate the communication in your using the same sca
L 1	M	L	5	5
L 2	M	L	5	4
L 3	F	L	3	1
L 4	F	L	2	2
L 5	F	L	3	3
L 6	M	H	5	4
L 7	M	H	3	2
L 8	F	H	2	4
L 9	F	H	6	3
L 10	F	H	2	4
L 11	F	H	2	2
L 12	F	H	2	2
L 13	F	H	5	4
L 14	F	H	4	4
L 15	M	H	3	3
L 16	F	H	5.5	6
L 17	F	H	3	3
L 18	M	H	2	3
L 19	F	H	5	5
L 20	M	H	5	6

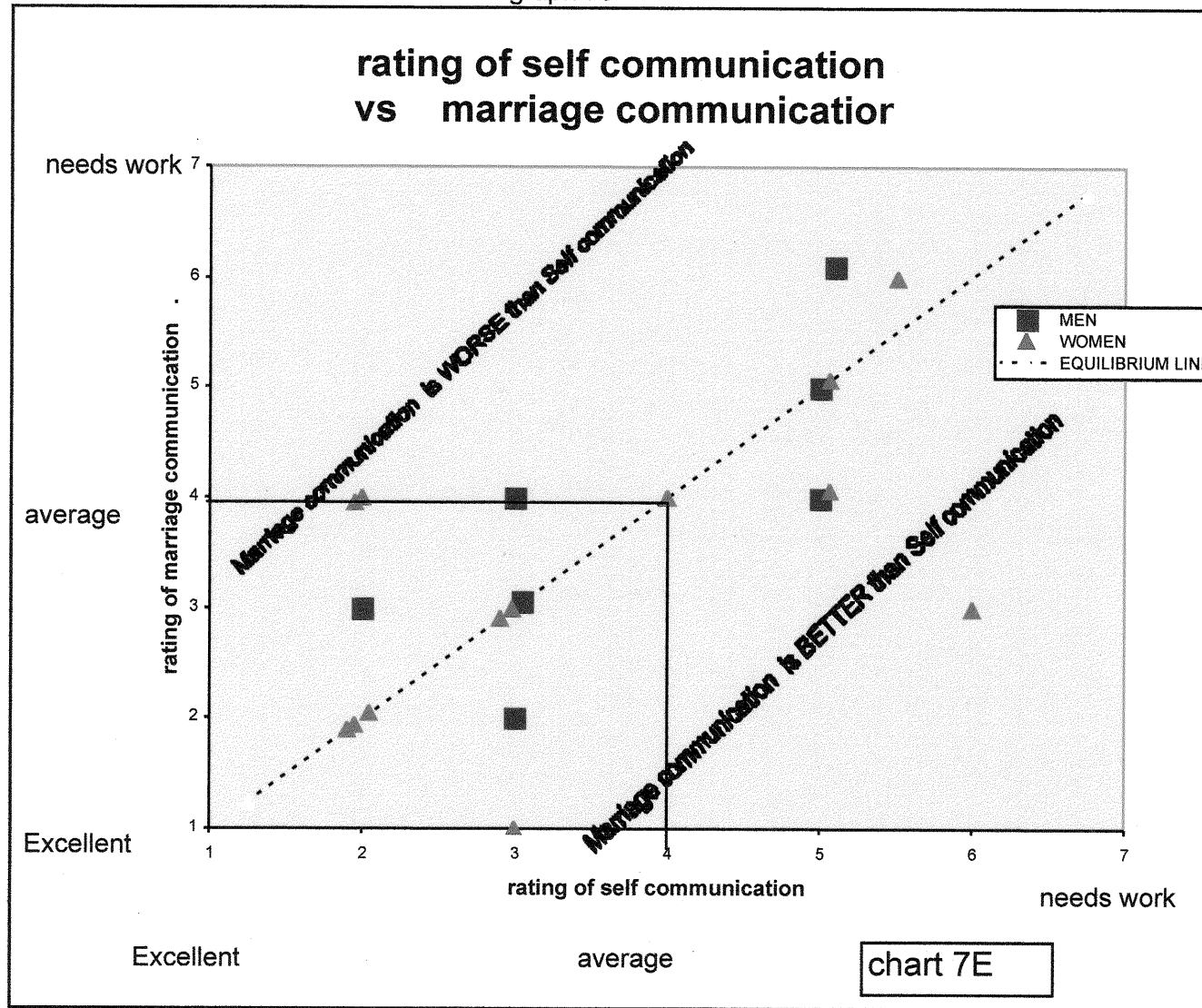
survey #	male or Female	Leader of class (L or newlywed (H)	granularity*
1	M	L	5
2	M	L	4
3	M	H	5
4	F	L	0
5	F	L	0
6	M	H	0
7	M	H	0
8	M	H	0.05
9	M	H	0
10	M	H	0.096
11	F	L	0
12	F	L	0.048
13	F	L	-0.01
14	F	H	0
15	F	H	0
16	F	H	-0.048
17	F	H	-0.072
18	F	H	-0.096
19	F	H	0.07
20	F	H	0
21	F	H	0
22	F	H	-0.1
23	F	H	0.07

survey #	MEN	WOMEN
1	5	5
2	3	4
3	5	4
4	3	2
5	3.05	3.05
6	2	3
7	5.096	6.096
8	3	1
9	2.048	2.048
10	2.99	2.99
11	2	4
12	6	3
13	1.952	3.952
14	1.948	1.948
15	1.904	1.904
16	5.07	4.07
17	4	4
18	5.5	6
19	2.9	2.9
20	5.07	5.07

1.25
6.75

"granularity" is a small number (compared with the overall value), added to both columns so as to show data points that

graph 7e



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Vita

Christine May was born to Frank and Evelyn Goffio on September 10, 1950 in Brooklyn, New York. Educated in public schools through twelfth grade, she received a B.A. in Child Development from Tufts University in May of 1972. She received an M.T.S. in Counseling and Christian Education, magna cum laude, from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in May of 1974. While there, she was elected to the Phi Alpha Chi Honor Society.

Her work experience includes teaching kindergarten (1974-1975), being an administrative assistant in the Dean of Undergraduate Studies Office at Tufts University (1975-1982), and home schooling her two children through the eighth grade. She is currently working as the part-time, in-house counselor at Lexington Christian Academy, a private preparatory school for grades six through twelve.

Her volunteer experience has centered around Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts, the church where she became a Christian in 1968. She has been active as a teacher, mentor, and writer in the church's college, single, and family ministries over the years. She is currently a deacon for Family Ministry. She has also been the director of a multi-church women's Bible study for almost twenty years.

She entered the Doctor of Ministry program in the fall of 2003 and expects to receive her Doctor of Ministry degree in Effective Ministry to Women from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in May of 2007.